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MY FRIEND THE PARTRIDGE

S. T. HAMMOND.

My Friend the Partridge

Memories of New England Shooting

BY S. T. HAMMOND
("Shadow")

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD.

Stephen Tillinghast Hammond may fairly be called the Nestor of American sportsmen. This does not mean that he is the oldest of these, but that in our belief he has had more experience in wing shooting than any other man in the country; that is, he has devoted more years to it, and more time each year, than any one of whom we know. He is one of the most expert of expert wing shots.

Mr. Hammond was born in Webster, Mass., Dec. 21, 1831. A year or two later his family moved to Dudley, Mass., and when he was a little more than nine years old, moved again to Pomfret Landing, Conn. It was in Pomfret that he killed his first partridge, caught in a snare, in 1842, when he was eleven years old. Since then he has hunted them every season, more or less, but usually more.

In 1853 or 1854 he went to Davenport, Iowa, leaving his home the day after Thanksgiving, and reaching it again the day before Thanksgiving in the following year. He went out West—for then Iowa was the West—in order to shoot, and during his stay he had experience with nearly every sort of game found in that section; from deer to cottontail, from wild turkey to quail, from swan to butterball, and from sandhill crane to jacksnipe; in fact, here he enjoyed more and better shooting than ever

he had heard or dreamed of. He has shot many seasons in the South, especially at quail and wild turkey.

In 1861 Mr. Hammond was married. He has had eight children, of whom four are living. For many years he was a successful business man, but too heavy investment in real estate carried him down in the year 1878.

In 1881 he became the kennel editor of *Forest and Stream*, a position which he occupied for ten years. He was an acknowledged authority on field trial and bench show competition, and was a regular attendant at all such great events in this country in the years while he was kennel editor.

He is the author of several books that have had a wide popularity among sportsmen. These are "Training vs. Breaking," "Hitting vs. Missing," and "Nursing vs. Dosing," as applied to dogs. These volumes are not only charming in style, but have proved most useful to the younger generation of sportsmen.

Of late years Mr. Hammond has resided in Springfield, where he has worked in the United States Armory. Two years ago, while at work, he fell from a bench and smashed his ankle so badly that he will be a cripple for life, but he hunts partridge just the same.

GEORGE BIRD GRINNELL.

New York City, March, 1908.

My Friend the Partridge.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHARM OF UPLAND SHOOTING.

THERE is a charm in the pursuit of New England upland game that appeals to the heart of the sportsman, that fills his soul with a sweet content and delight that seldom comes to him in other, even the best, game sections of this broad land. Faith in this statement permeates my whole being; corroborative evidence in abundance can be readily obtained from many hundreds of sportsmen who are qualified by a large and varied experience in different localities to give expert testimony as to its truth.

In the silent watches of the night, while camping out on the broad Iowa prairies with my companion and three strangers who had joined us at sunset, I answered, in response to the question as to how I liked Western shooting, that

one day among the forest-crowned hills of dear New England was worth weeks on the treeless plain. One of the strangers grasped my hand with a grip that made my fingers tingle, another threw his arms around me with a fervent, "God bless you," while the third gave by far the most flattering and impressive indorsement of the opinion I had expressed by hastily drawing his hand across his eyes as he arose, and with bowed head walked away. I afterward learned that this man was born among the Berkshire hills in old Massachusetts, where he had spent many happy days in pursuit of his favorite sport, and it was his description of the wondrous beauty of the locality that led me a few years later to one of the fairest sections of country for the sportsman that I have ever seen. When I gazed upon his former home surrounded by the everlasting hills, and feasted my eyes upon the beauties of nature in its rugged wildness here displayed, I could not doubt that the well-springs of his heart were stirred to their utmost depths when on the bleak and desolate prairie he heard from stranger lips ardent words of praise for the old home of his youth so fondly loved.

I was once in the dense canebrakes of Mississippi in search of the elusive turkey, with a genuine swamp angel for a guide. When our barren hunt was over I changed my shells, and by quick work succeeded in bringing down several woodcock. The "angel" rolled up his eyes at me and queried, "Is you a Yank?" Telling him in the words of the immortal Whittier that "I gloried in the name," he exclaimed, "Dat's right, boss; dat's right. Jess like de one was here lass week. We done killed seben turks on dat sandbar when he tole me dat de shootin' up norf was a heap better dan down here, and dat dere was right smart more fun in de pattige dan dere was in de turk." Thinking that perhaps he did not quite understand why this should be so, I made everything as plain as possible by explaining that the "pattige," as he called it, was not only a gallinaceous bird, but a herbivorous and gramnivorous one as well, and that its propulsive power was such that at times its momentum was phenomenal. I was intending to give him more of the life history of the bird, but the manner in which he received my remarks led me to stop speaking, for the way that counte-

nance worked, and the whites of those eyes dilated as the long words fell upon his ear was a study for an artist. When I stopped he looked up to me with an expression that plainly showed me that he was now convinced, and ejaculated, "Well, boss, I speck dat Yank was 'bout right, and I reckon you 'uns must think a heap of dose pattige."

The love of that "Yank" for the sport to be found in the home of his childhood, gave me a sympathetic feeling of brotherhood with the unknown stranger, and as I meandered through the tangled canebrake, thoughts of glorious days with the "pattige" among the forest-crowned hills of beloved New England came to cheer me, and soon the poignant feeling of regret that I had not held a trifle further ahead on that big gobbler mellowed down into a fading and rather pleasant remembrance of the great black living picture that had so swiftly crossed my path.

This love for the shooting in New England is not merely love for the sport in itself, but is a far deeper, holier feeling than ever comes to him whose joy in the life of the field is inspired by success. A profound appreciation of the beau-

tiful in nature, for the grandeur of our ever-new, ever-changing panorama of hill and mountain, of sequestered nook and lovely dell, of laughing brook and bubbling spring, of whispering pine and stately oak, of balmy air and deep blue sky, creates and fosters this love until it permeates the whole being.

There is an endless diversity of happenings, as well as surroundings, when in pursuit of our game birds that adds much to our enjoyment when summing up the pleasures of the day. In many sections different varieties of game are to be found in the same coverts, and there is often a glorious and deeply interesting uncertainty as to just what bird it is that is crouching before your dog. The "partridge crank" grips his gun with firmer clasp as he walks in to flush the bird, fondly hoping to hear the thunderous roar of the swiftly beating pinions of his favorite. The man who best loves the royal woodcock advances with eager step, dreaming of the weird music of that querulous whistle and the gentle swish of the silken wings so pleasing to his ear, while he whose choice is the gamy quail, with satisfied smile is reveling in thoughts of the

tumultuous rush and roar of the startled bevy, and by faith he sees the air thickly dotted with the flashing forms of the little bird he loves so well. Who shall say that this glorious uncertainty is not almost the best of the whole? Surely not I, for I have enjoyed these pleasing sensations too many times to deny their power. I have a choice as to the bird I would flush, for my first favorite is that best of all game birds, the ruffed grouse; but I so love them all that I am cheerfully content with what the gods provide, and am truly happy when either of the beautiful trio blesses me with its presence, and I spend no time in vain regret for a bygone "it might have been." Scores of times have mine eyes been gladdened and my pulses quickened by simultaneous rises of two of these varieties, and fond recollections of many a glorious double of this nature often come back to me when in overhauling memory's storehouse I find myself again threading the leafy aisles of some favorite cover of the good old days. On several occasions I have flushed all three of these birds from one point, and with the assistance of a companion have gathered them all in.

CHAPTER II.

THE RUFFED GROUSE.

The ruffed grouse in New England, commonly called partridge, is the very best game bird that inhabits this continent. I say this advisedly, and without fear of contradiction from any sportsman who has hunted them enough to become fairly well acquainted with their habits and is at all expert in their capture. Many writers insist that this royal bird is a very unsatisfactory one to pursue for sport, and they have written columns in its vilification and are unsparing in epithets, condemning some of its characteristic habits. All of which goes to prove conclusively that these same writers have scant knowledge of the subject upon which they have wasted so much valuable ink.

I have many times been greatly amused to wit-

ness the sudden change in the opinion of one of these outspoken gentlemen when given opportunity to participate in the pleasure that comes to those only who dearly love the fascinating sport, and have learned by a large experience, some at least of the many interesting traits and habits that are a part of the life of this truly royal inhabitant of the forests that crown with glory our beautiful hills and mountains. A brief period with the expert grouse hunter in the haunts of his favorite bird will nearly always prove to the cynic or tyro that there is a hitherto undreamed of wealth of sport and pleasure in the pursuit of this splendid bird; and if he is possessed of true sportsmanlike instinct and has patience to persevere, his reward is sure, and regal sport awaits his pleasure.

The late Hon. George Ashmun—than whom more finished gentleman or truer sportsman never went afield—was not in his earlier days a lover of the partridge in the way of sport. He was often the shooting companion of the immortal Webster, and the only criticism of the great statesman that I ever heard him utter was that he loved the partridge "not wisely, but too well."

My first two shooting expeditions with Mr. Ashmun were devoted to the woodcock covers, and no attempt was made to search for grouse. Of course we took an occasional shot at them when we found them—intruding, he called it—on the woodcock grounds; but his distaste for following them was so pronounced that I rather reluctantly suppressed my inclinations and devoted my time to his favorite bird, the woodcock. The third time we were out together we visited the quaint old town of Holland in the southern portion of the old Bay State, a town that can boast more ragged rocks and rugged hills to the square acre than any town I know that holds or rather did hold so many birds.

On this occasion we very fortunately found one of his favorite woodcock covers without a single longbill, but we did find a noble covey of grouse that flushed wild and settled in some small detached patches of dense cover that looked most promising. With the most serious expression of countenance and voice that I could assume I launched torrents of abuse at the intruding grouse for usurping the ground that was the birthright of the woodcock. Then as the next

friend of the evicted innocents, I appealed to my companion, as a lawyer, for advice as to the proper course to pursue. With a merry twinkle in his eye and a broad smile upon his countenance he took a firmer grasp of his gun, and in a melodramatic tone exclaimed, *"Fiat justitia ruat cœlum."* Then we went for those intruders, and for more than two hours we reveled in the enjoyment of such sport as only comes to the elect when, with congenial companion, "the best dog in the world," beautiful surroundings, plenty of birds and straight powder, he adds one more priceless gem to the store of memories that shall come back to cheer and bless his joyless hours when shooting days are over.

Mr. Ashmun—as he afterward acknowledged—proposed going for the birds more to please me than with any thought of sport. He well knew that the royal bird had the warmest corner in my heart, and that every nerve in my frame was still vibrating with responsive echo of the music of the quickly beating pinions. I plainly saw that his countenance lacked the animated expression that illuminated it when following his favorite bird, and it was with unbounded pleasure and

satisfaction that I noted the gradual change in his features as the sport became more and more exciting, until even the "woodcock expression" was intensified and glorified, and I did not need the assurance he gave to know that he too had become a "partridge crank." Mr. Ashmun never forsook his first love, the woodcock, but ever after this he had a good word for the bird he had so often condemned, and was always ready to try conclusions with them.

I could record scores of similar instances, for I have very many times had the pleasure of witnessing just such change of heart; but perhaps I have said enough to illustrate the point I wished to make relative to the great love for the sport of grouse shooting that comes to those who have opportunity to enjoy the pleasure that attends successful pursuit of this wise and wary will-o'-the-wisp of the tangled thicket.

The life history of the ruffed grouse has never been written. Many deeply interesting sketches of portions of it have from time to time been placed before us, but never a comprehensive and truthful description of the going and coming, the likes and dislikes, the resultant ef-

fects of unnatural conditions as well as a thousand and one other items of interest that all belong to the daily life of this preternaturally wise and most interesting bird.

Many years ago I took no little pride in the belief that I knew about all that was worth knowing in relation to this bird, but as the years rolled on I learned—and enjoyed pleasure in the learning—that my boasted knowledge was in truth insignificant; and the more I learned of the habits and characteristics of my wily favorite, the less inclined was I to make a fool of myself by pretension to knowledge that I knew was far removed from perfection. Each season for more than a half century I have devoted considerable time to the pursuit of my favorite bird, and I believe myself to be fairly proficient in their capture; but even now, with all my experience, they often get the best of me by playing me some new dodge or trick, and so well do I know them that I feel sure that no matter how proficient I may become, their wits, sharpened by experience, will often cause me sorrow as I realize that I have again been outwitted.

CHAPTER III.

LOCAL NAMES.

This magnificent game bird was known to the scientist of early days as *Tetrao umbellus.* The well known naturalist, Bonaparte, interpolated the subgeneric term *Bonasa,* making the scientific name *Tetrao* (*Bonasa*) *umbellus.* Scientists of later days, Nuttall, Samuels and many others, dropped *Tetrao,* and a few years ago the American Ornithologists' Union put the seal of approval upon this and now our beautiful friend is known to the scientific world as *Bonasa umbellus.* Many that make no pretension to scientific knowledge know it as the ruffed grouse. Nearly every one in New England, as well as in portions of the Middle and Western States, calls it the partridge, while to others in some of the Middle and Southern States it is known as the pheasant,

and in some portions of those sections as mountain pheasants. In northern portions of the country, where the spruce partridge is found, our bird is called the birch partridge. In New Jersey I have had it pointed out to me as the heathcock, and several times in widely separated sections I have been told that it was the tippet grouse. I was hunting turkeys in Virginia, having as a guide a veritable "child of the mist," who lived in a lone cabin in the mountains some two miles from Ashby's Gap. While walking along a bridle path a grouse rose nearby and I cut it down, when the old darkey made a rush and seized the bird, which he held aloft in triumph as he exclaimed, "Fore de lawd, boss, if you hain't done killed a ghost bird." This was the first time that I heard this name applied to it, but I have since learned that in some localities the name is quite commonly used. I have also frequently heard it called the drummer as well as the thunder bird. I have also often heard the name brown grouse, and have been told several times in different localities that this was the shoulder-knot partridge.

A wise sportsman has told us that "a rose by

any other name would smell as sweet," so I shall find no fault with either of these names, nor shall I quarrel with the sponsor for bestowing them, for I have enjoyed too much of sport in all of the sections where these cognomens prevail to cavil at trifles like these. I must, however, draw the line at "ruffled" grouse. I cannot stand this misnomer, nor extend the hand of fellowship to the man who bestows it upon my very best bird.

The naturalist Trumbull quotes from an old author who was writing of the partridge: "Their flesh is good in hectic fevers, the gall sharpens the sight, and the blood resists poison." True for you, brother sportsman; every word is gospel truth, for oftentimes when the "hectic fever" born of ardent longing for communion with my dearly loved bird in its sylvan home has held me in its grasp, I have been quickly and completely brought to my normal condition by even only a fleeting glimpse of my favorite bird in the flesh. Often has the gall engendered by failure to catch a glimpse of a startled bird "sharpened" my sight and brought me into better condition to see the next one through the dense

covert. Often has the poison instilled into my mind by contamination with worldly affairs been completely neutralized and driven from my system at the sight of the blood of this beautiful king of the forest.

I shall not undertake to give anything approaching a complete description of the characteristics belonging to this bird, nor even of its habits, natural or acquired, for I well know that I have yet much to learn regarding its life history, and I shall therefore confine myself strictly to such facts as have come under my own observation during the many pleasant interviews I have held with these magnificent birds in different sections of the country, leaving all guess work and pedantic abstruseness for other subjects with which I am less familiar.

Nearly all writers about the ruffed grouse persist in pronouncing it the very wildest bird to be found in our country. This has been the almost universal view expressed for many years, and so much has it been harped on that "wild as a partridge" has passed into a proverb. That the bird is wild, so far as living in a state of nature is concerned, is patent to all; but to say

that it is wild in the sense that most writers believe and endeavor to demonstrate, is to misrepresent this highly gifted bird. There is no game bird which possesses greater perceptive faculties and reasoning powers than this; and for one to state that the wisdom, born of bitter experience, that leads it to shun one's presence, is simply wildness, argues little for the quality of the knowledge so characteristic of this preternaturally wise and crafty bird. When time was young—with me—I have, hundreds of times, flushed from almost under my feet large coveys of partridges, and many times I have seen them, not twenty feet distant, skulking away from my path with never a "wild" one in the lot. In recent years, I have seen many instances of the same nature in our grand old Northern forests, where the modern shooter is comparatively unknown. This conclusively proves to me that the ruffed grouse is not naturally wild in the sense that so many writers and talkers would have us believe, while the abundant reasons—from their standpoint—that this wise bird gives them for their belief, just as conclusively proves that it has risen to the occasion and learned the truth

and value of that modern axiom so vital to success that "only he who hustles will get there."

The manner in which this knowledge has become so widely diffused among the partridges passes my comprehension. I can readily understand why it is that a bird that is constantly hunted and shot at should in a short time become wary when it had reason to believe that deadly foes were seeking its destruction, but I cannot understand how it is that young and presumably unsophisticated birds, that have never been previously disturbed by the hunter, should vie with the "oldest" patriarch in the knowledge of ways and means to outwit even the most expert hunter. I know absolutely nothing that will shed any light upon this question, and shall therefore leave the matter for others to determine, whether this is an instinct or acquired knowledge, or whether there is a bird language by which the callow brood is taught the principles of cause and effect that generally obtain when the hunter is abroad in the land, as well as the crafty tricks and dodges that so often succeed in convincing the would-be captor that his intended victim is too "wild"

for him. Year by year, I have watched, with ever-increasing interest and delight, the constant and truly wonderful increase of wisdom that comes to even the youngest and most isolated of these birds, and as I realize the significance of this important change in the habits and instincts—if I may be allowed the expression—of my favorites, there is, deep down in my heart, a feeling of profound joy and satisfaction in knowing that in spite of modern methods and countless hordes of modern shooters, this sovereign of stately wood and sylvan dell still lives and gives fair promise to bless future generations with untold wealth of most fascinating sport.

CHAPTER IV.

TRICKS AND SUBTERFUGES.

I HAVE always taken great delight in witnessing the many tricks and subterfuges to which this crafty bird resorts to escape the hunter, and it is well that I do; for very many times this is all that I have had left to console me for the defeat of well laid plans and the coming to naught of long and weary tramps.

Early in the season of the year 1905, while out shooting, I met a farmer friend who told me of a large covey of grouse on the summit of quite a steep hill near by, and I at once started in pursuit of them. When I gained the summit, I found myself in an open pasture liberally sprinkled with patches of blackberry briars, with a promising looking alder cover on the opposite side. The dog struck scent within a few

rods of the edge and soon had them fast; but as I started to go to him a large covey of grouse rose out of shot, and, flying across the pasture, settled in the alder cover. When I arrived there I found the cover to consist of clumps of young alder sprouts not more than four feet high with zig-zag paths between the clumps, from two to four feet wide. Congratulating myself upon the soft snap I had in such a spot, I sent on the dog and he soon pinned one. As I walked up to him, I well remember that there was a feeling in my heart of commiseration for the poor birds, for it was impossible for them to escape from such a place. But when I forced a rise, this feeling vanished as by magic, for I never saw the "poor" bird, although it rose within ten feet of me, for it twisted along those zig-zag paths and never showed itself until out of shot.

This performance was something entirely new to me, and it gave me quite a turn, but the trick was so neatly done that admiration for the wisdom of the performer soon dispelled my grief, although I did feel rather foolish about my sentiments of pity for the poor unprotected

bird when I heard them rising all around me with never one of them showing so much as a single feather until at a safe distance. Every one of the covey cut that same caper, and the last I saw of them, they were far away, amid the sheltering arms of a dense grove of pines. When the first one sprang this low down trick on me, I believed it to be the old hen bird with wit and wisdom sufficient for the present occasion at least, but when the entire family repeated the performance, I regretfully came to the conclusion that there was something radically wrong in the educational system that I had so long and ardently pursued; or that I had sadly neglected my opportunities, to get so badly left in an encounter with these young and unsophisticated dwellers in the wildwood whose habits and traits I had spent a lifetime in studying. I was deeply interested in the future of these birds, and in order that they should not deteriorate or become careless from lack of opportunity to keep their wits sharpened, I gave the snap away to three or four friends, and from all I could gather in relation to the matter, I judged that there were quite exciting

times upon that hilltop for many days; but I failed to learn that the gallant band lost more than two or three of their number during the whole season.

Next October, I shall again climb that steep hill, and again pit my skill against their cunning, and, my word for it, there will be no pity in my heart when I get among them. I shall not again return with empty pockets, for I intend reading up all that I can find in relation to their habits. Surely I shall find something that will give me a pointer as to the proper course to pursue in order to circumvent these up-to-date and very fly dwellers on that beautiful hilltop.

Within the limits of this goodly city, and not more than two miles from where I am now sitting, there is an extensive tract of forest and swamp with several little outlying alder runs, that was a famous place for birds some years ago. Even now, one can occasionally enjoy a little sport there. The queen of that section of country is a famous old hen partridge. She has lived in that vicinity and reared her family each season for several years. This veritable ghost bird has seen enough powder burned to an-

nihilate her race, and heard profanity enough to put to shame "our army in Flanders." Tricks and subterfuges without number are part and parcel of her daily life throughout each open season. Strong of wing and ever watchful, she is up and away before danger approaches within harmful distance, and so long and deviously uncertain is her flight that it is rare for one to find her the second time. I once saw her rise two gun shots away, and fly straight as an arrow for a favorite cover, approaching it with every indication of alighting, even to lowering near the ground and setting her wings; but just as she was near the edge she swerved sharply to the right and with the seeming vigor of a newly started bird she laid her course in the direction of another cover. My companion joined me a few minutes later when I explained matters to him and assured him that this was the turning point in this bird's career, for we now had her down fine where she could not escape. With mutual congratulations upon our good fortune in getting on to this well planned dodge, we complacently wended our way to the cover with never a doubt that at last, after so many inglorious

failures, the long sought prize was ours. Arriving at the run that I had seen the bird making for, I sent my companion around to the point where she would be forced to pass, and, ordering on the dog, I followed along the edge of the run, feeling perfectly sure that there was no escape for our very uncertain friend. But when we came to the upper end and the dog had carefully worked out every foot of the cover we found, upon comparing notes, that we did not feel quite so sure of the result, for she most certainly was not there.

There was a patch of birch cover a short distance further on, and we decided that she had taken refuge there. We proceeded to invest the stronghold by deploying to the right and left. My companion was to take position at the far corner while I entered the cover at the opposite end. We started for our respective posts. Some thirty yards away and right in my course was a patch of hazel, about the size of a hogshead which I passed so near that some of the branches brushed me, but it was not until I was twenty steps beyond it that I gave it a thought and then I had no time for much de-

liberation, for out from the clump came the roar of the quickly beating pinions of a startled grouse. It took me only the fractional part of a second to right about face and present arms, but there was not a feather in sight. Intuitively I realized that this ghost bird was flitting away, out of sight, under the protecting cover of that bunch of hazel. Instinctively I cut loose at the center of it. At the crack of the gun my companion gave a cheer that filled my heart with unalloyed pleasure, for I well knew that the escape of our long sought quarry could never inspire a shout like that. When he joined me, my dog was delivering the bird into my hand. As I looked at it, I cut short my friend's exordium upon the wildest, most crafty, exasperating of birds by telling him that this was not the bird he was holding an inquest upon, but only just an ordinary young bird that had made an ordinary mistake in leaving its stronghold at least an hour before the one we had been searching for would have stirred.

The only item of interest to add to this tale is that our crafty friend still lives, for we did not get even a glimpse of her.

There is one rather neat as well as very exasperating trick that appears to be quite generally understood and practiced by these birds, for I have often been its victim in sections so widely distant that there is no reason to doubt that the whole family are up to it. The trick is simple and at the same time very effective. It is performed by the bird placing a tree, bush, or other obstruction between the shooter and itself within the first few yards of its flight. I have often had occasion to grieve over this crooked work of my pets, and have often speculated upon the primal source of the knowledge of this dodge that appears to be so universally employed by fledgelings as well as patriarchs; but notwithstanding much deep study and earnest thought, no solution of the problem that seems satisfactory to me has yet materialized. I am still in doubt whether reason, natural instinct, general or special education, or something else of which I know nothing, is the source of this knowledge.

In the good old days when abundant sport was the sure reward of a day with the partridge, it was my delight to strike the trail of a wary

bird that sought to make its escape by the use of its legs. I was sometimes able to defeat this device, for all I had to do to secure a rise within proper distance was to give a casual glance at the line of the country followed by the bird and take note of any opening, such as a cart-path or vacant place in the undergrowth that crossed the bird's course. Then I would leave the dog to follow the trail, and advance to the opening, where I often obtained a rise within shot, or, if the bird had crossed before my arrival the same tactics were pursued at the successive openings until the end. These lovers of the deep-tangled wildwood and dense undergrowth, very much dislike to leave the shelter of the thick covert to cross an open place when deadly foes are on their trail, and it is their usual habit to tarry at the edge, and this often leads to their destruction. Within the past few years, however, this has changed, and all the dearly bought acuteness and hardly earned knowledge that were once my joy and pride are now as naught, for scarcely one in ten of these up-to-date birds will allow any stratagem of this nature to be played on them. They just

go around the openings, or take flight before they come to them, thus giving one more proof that the god of reason, instinct, education or whatever it is that protects them has these beautiful birds in his careful keeping. We can readily believe that in the future, as in the past, these wise and wary ones will rise to the occasion and will long survive to adorn our forests and make glad the hearts of coming generations of sportsmen.

There is one device that is occasionally resorted to by these birds that is the same to-day as in the olden time, for the reason, I presume, that it is so uniformily successful that there is no reason for abandoning it. This trick is done by doubling on its trail; for the trail your dog is so persistently following leads straight on, and while one is meditatively calculating the chances in front, the bird has swung around the circle. One fondly expects to see it rise from an inviting looking spot just ahead. Suddenly, with a thundrous racket, it bursts into the air just behind the pursuer. Shoot! of course you shoot, and then kick the dog; for this appears to be the orthodox wind up of such a failure and is about

the only satisfaction you can get out of the affair unless, like me, you have become so accustomed to the maneuver that you just give a short whistle of surprise and upon the whole rather enjoy the performance. One is not more than half sorry that the brave bird was successful in the bold artistic strategy that well deserved the victory so fairly won.

It is not always thus, however, for I have had a large experience in this line and have so schooled my nerves, that when this dodge is sprung on me, it often chances that the old gun jumps to the proper position, the trigger is pulled at the proper time, and as the wily trickster doubles up in air, there is a pride and joy in my heart that, I am free to confess, is somewhat more satisfactory than is the aforesaid enjoyment when the honors count on the other side.

CHAPTER V.

SHOOTING GROUSE FROM TREES.

Partridges often seek to escape the hunter by taking shelter in the branches of trees. I have read columns of choice rhetoric and argument against the practice of shooting them when thus found, unless they are first routed from their perch and given a chance for their life. I deeply regret that I have never had opportunity to take note of the behavior of one of these exponents of fair play, when under fire, and of course cannot say whether the feeling that prompts the rhetoric is born of an inherent love for the beauty of the principles involved in the question as expounded by them and is so well grounded that it would stand the test of actual contact with that most alluring temptation that so forcibly appeals to the grosser feel-

ings of our nature when the eager eye catches a glimpse of that living picture, immovable as a statue, perched within fair gunshot on yonder branch. For the sake of all that is pure and good in the make-up of poor, weak mortality, I most sincerely hope and trust that the culmination of such an episode will bring added strength to the heaven-born feeling, as well as added days for our beautiful friend in the treetop.

I have been afield with hundreds of sportsmen, but have yet to meet the one who can resist the temptation to shoot a grouse sitting in a tree. Even I myself must confess that more than once the sight of that living picture has tempted me with a force that I was unable to resist. Not many times, however—perhaps a dozen all told—have I committed this sin—if sin it be—for there are several very excellent reasons why my victims in this line have been few. First, it is extremely difficult to locate even so large a bird as this, though it may be sitting in plain view, with not a leaf or twig to hide its form; for it is a wise provision of nature that all wild game appears to have the miraculous power of becoming invisible

RUFFED GROUSE FOUR MONTHS OLD.

to mortal eyes, even when in plain view. In addition to this, the partridge appears to know that it is perfectly safe so long as you do not see it, and it keeps a wary watch upon your movements, taking instant flight when it suspects that your eye has discovered its hiding place. So abrupt and often devious is the departure of the phantom, that the most expert shot, who is new to this business, is rarely successful in making proper connection. It has been a rule with me to shoot when such conditions obtain, and shoot very quickly, and many times have I got on to the unknown angle, greatly to my satisfaction and much to the wonder of my companions.

There is still another accomplishment that this bird has recently learned that is well worthy of record. I have obtained within the past four years abundant proof that our preternaturally wise and wary friend has discovered that the dog whistle means trouble, and to avoid this he at once takes flight as soon as the piercing sound reaches his ear, leaving the discomfited hunter to wonder why the dog can make nothing of the apparently fresh scent. I had suspected something of this, but did not give the matter much

thought until one day, when I was working out open country for quail, I came within some two hundred yards of a favorite grouse cover and decided to investigate it.

Blowing the whistle for the dog, I turned toward the cover just in time to see a noble cock bird burst from the center of it and make a long flight to a patch of alders. The conduct awakened my slumbering suspicions that the whistle was to blame in such cases, and as the ground was favorable, I determined to investigate the matter further. Crossing to a knoll about two hundred yards from his place of refuge, I again blew the whistle, and was not greatly surprised to see this wary bird again take wing and make for a dense thicket four or five hundred yards away. Now I had had lots of trouble in that place, and in order to prevent the bird from causing me grief in the tangled thicket, I went around to the edge some distance above the bird, when I gave him another call with the whistle, to which he instantly responded, and greatly to my satisfaction flew straight across the open to the far point of a birch knoll. This knoll was about forty yards in width at the end nearest me, run-

ning some hundred yards and tapering gradually to the point. There was no cover for half a mile beyond the point, and the bird must take a course along the birch thicket to reach any cover, so I took up a position at the end of the knoll near the center, and gave him the whistle for the last time. To prove my suspicion to be well founded, he again rose, and it was with deep satisfaction that I saw him coming my way, and in a few seconds I was smoothing out his ruffled plumage and telling him in the most impressive language that I could muster that he would rise to the whistle never more this side of the happy hunting ground. There are so many different tricks and dodges that these birds will resort to when one has them in a corner, where it is seemingly impossible for them to escape, that one is lost in wonder at the almost human intelligence displayed as by some maneuver least expected, a bird is out of danger with not a feather harmed.

There is a favorite cover among the Berkshire Hills that a friend and I have shot over for several years. A portion of this cover is a wide strip of alders along a small stream between

two high and very steep hills. Upon one side there is open ground about twenty yards in width, with a hedge of hazel in the center some ten feet in width, extending about a hundred yards. Nearly every time we visit the place a partridge flushes from the strip of hazel before we are within two gunshots of her and climbs straight in the air to the top of the hill and safety, for it is almost impossible to follow her. We put up with this treatment on several occasions without protest, and rather admired the performance, but finally it became monotonous. We held a council of war, and after considerable deliberation, we decided upon a course that would surely outgeneral the bird. My companion went around at the foot of the opposite hill beyond the head of the strip of hazel, where he crossed over and took position where the bird must give him a chance. When he was in place I sent on the dog and followed him with perfect confidence that there would be no more of this exasperating nonsense, for my companion was a sure shot, and both of us had already counted the bird. The dog had gone but a short distance along the hazel thicket, when I heard the bird rise nearly at the

upper end, and soon saw her over the top of the thicket, going in the right direction, and I knew she was our meat. My companion stood facing me, but when the bird was within ten feet of him, he turned around and brought his gun into position, intending to give it to her after she had passed him, but he never had a chance to pull trigger, for that blessed bird no sooner caught sight of him than she pitched down to the ground not twenty feet beyond him, alighting under the shelter of a big stone, when she ran for her life until at a safe distance, when she again took wing and was soon over the hills and far away. We brought home sixteen birds that day, but we always call it forty-eight, for we are both agreed that we had twice the fun and real enjoyment out of the bird in the hazel thicket that we did with all the others.

Many years ago there was a noble cock grouse that made his home in a dense thicket that bordered a bog meadow. The bird died long ago probably from old age, as I do not believe that any one ever got a shot at him. I certainly did not, although I tried my best for it for several years, many times each season. How that bird

could run! No sooner did he hear the footsteps of hunter or dog than he would run at his best speed a long distance and then rise and fly to the opposite side of the cover, and so persistently did he follow these tactics that several of his most ardent followers became disgusted and left him to his fate; but I stuck to him and laid more plans for his destruction than would have brought to grief scores of ordinary birds. I once enlisted a company of six volunteers for the purpose of putting an end to the business. We started out with high hopes that at last we had our very foxy friend at a disadvantage, and that victory was ours. Arriving near the cover, my men silently advanced to their allotted stations, while I awaited the proper time when I sent on the dog. He soon struck the trail of our fleet-footed friend, and in a short time I heard the patter of his footsteps upon the dry leaves, and noted with satisfaction that he was going straight toward the center of the line of outposts. I then obliqued to the right, and was soon at my chosen stand in a little opening by the bog meadow, where I could cut off his retreat in case he should decide to come in my direction. After the battle was over

and we had come together to take account of stock and compare notes, I learned that our would-be victim ran within a few yards of one of the sentinels and stopped, but the cover was so dense that he could not be seen, and when next heard from this contumacious bird was running for his life the other way. This course brought him straight to me, and as I heard him coming, I knew he was mine, and mentally hugged myself in delight at the success of our plan. In a few seconds he came into the opening not twenty feet distant, still putting his best foot foremost; but he had taken but a few steps before he caught sight of me, when he moderated his break-neck speed to a stately walk, spreading out his tail and elevating his ruff until they stood out almost straight, while his top-knot stood on end, as he majestically paraded before me a few steps, when he disappeared from my sight behind a grassy bog. I was there in less than a second frantically kicking among the bogs in order to force a rise, but there was never a rise, nor did I again see him until he was two gunshots away, when I heard him rise and saw him as he burst from the middle of the narrow strip of bogs and took his

way toward a thicket of pines, where it was useless to follow him.

This trick of running away is by no means a common one, although I have known many instances of the kind, and have often heard hunters complain that this exasperating performance had been played on them.

CHAPTER VI.

THE "CRAZY SEASON."

THERE is one habit that is common to the whole race so far as I have been able to learn, and I have yet to meet the shooter who does not heartily condemn it, for this trait nearly spoils the pleasure of pursuing them for two or three weeks soon after the season opens. In September, usually, these birds seem to be posessed of the very spirit of unrest, taking wing without apparent cause, and flying away into the unknown aimlessly and often in a direction that leads them away from all cover. At this time, the country papers often contain accounts of partridges flying against buildings and killing themselves, or perhaps their erratic flight is through an open door or a window, but, so far as I have been able to learn, all such accidents occur when a dense fog

prevails. At this season they also devote a large share of the day to wandering long distances at a rate of speed that often puts the best of dogs at fault, for, long before he comes to the end of the erratic trail, the bird has flown, leaving its pursuers in a bewildered state, not conducive to the enjoyment of that peace of mind and sweet content which should obtain when seeking pleasure in the sports of the field. This behavior is variously known as "running time," "crazy time," or "wild time." All of these are appropriate, but "crazy" seems to be the better word. Although I have no doubt that there is "method in their madness," for I sincerely believe that bird or beast, or any created thing that possesses a trait, characteristic or instinct common to its race but does the will of an all-wise Creator when obeying the promptings of nature. I have often heard and read that the falling of the leaves frightens the bird into this state, but it seems to me presumptuous to believe that He who created every living thing should implant in the hearts of those dwellers among the forests fear of any cause or effect that nature's laws ordain.

While it is true that this season of unrest is

usually coincident with the falling of the leaf, it is also true that it is often the case that it begins long before a leaf has fallen. I remember several seasons when the leaves did not begin to fall until this period was over, and I also well remember more than one season when a "crazy time" did not begin until long after the trees were nearly bare. I shall not attempt a solution of this interesting problem, but will merely suggest that perhaps this may be a provision of nature to separate the members of the different broods, in order to prevent inbreeding; or it is possible that the instinct to wander was implanted in their breasts to scatter them abroad in the land and thus populate places that otherwise would be desolate. At all events, these last two conditions appear to be accomplished, whatever other purpose may be served by their seemingly aimless wanderings.

Many writers insist that food supply alone influences the distribution of this as well as other birds and animals that are undomesticated, but so far as my experience goes, this is not nearly always the case, for I have repeatedly found large tracts of country that, to all appearances, were nearly destitute of food of any description, where

birds were always to be found in abundance. This has been notably the case with the partridge, and I have often wondered why certain apparently barren sections of country should be the chosen home of this bird, while good looking coverts not far distant, abounding in food of various kinds, should be so nearly desolate that time spent in looking them over was nearly always wasted. It is not because the birds were bred in these barren places that they make it their home, for many times I have shot in such places during the season several times as many birds as could have been bred there. I well remember one famous cover of this description that in early days I visited many times nearly every season for twenty years. This cover was known to every one in the vicinity as Scrub Oak Hill. It was rightly named, for nearly the entire growth consisted of crooked and sprawling scrub oak bushes from eight to twelve feet in height, with underneath scattered clumps of the dwarf growing bush known as Jersey tea. There was not, so far as I could discover, the slightest trace of any food that these birds ever eat upon the entire tract, although I gave the matter considerable attention, and carefully

sought for something in this line that would satisfactorily explain why it was that birds in abundance were nearly always to be found here. I examined hundreds of the stunted acorns that grew upon the scrub oaks, but never found a single one with anything more inside than a dried-up brownish substance that was entirely lacking in nutriment, as the birds undoubtedly well knew, for I never found a single acorn in the craw of one of the many that I examined. My researches in this direction failed for the most part to find anything in the way of food, except occasionally a green leaf or two or a few blades of grass; but for the most part, the craw would be entirely empty. Nevertheless, this barren spot was a favorite resort for the birds, and many times I have shot more than a hundred here during the season, often bagging every bird, only to find upon my next visit, perhaps within a day or two that the cover was again as abundantly stocked as before. Where they all came from was also a mystery to me, for the nearest cover was more than a quarter of a mile distant, with no other in any direction within a mile.

The partridge subsists upon so varied an as-

sortment of food that it is impossible to decide just what its favorite dish is. I have examined the craws of many hundreds in order to determine this point, but am no nearer a decision than when I began my researches, for the apparent result of the investigation of one day would nearly always be overthrown by later inquiry. In sections where some one variety of food eaten by them was abundant, I have often found the craw filled with other food that appeared comparatively scarce in the vicinity, and that but little if any of the former had been used; then in other sections where the food conditions were reversed, I have also found the contents of the craw entirely different from what I expected. I long ago decided that nothing was proven by this, except perhaps that these birds were very like myself in the selection of a dinner. A large proportion of their diet, at least during the fall months, consists of the leaves of a large variety of plants, blades of grass, berries of various sorts, although the so-called partridge berry I have very rarely found—indeed I am sure that half a dozen instances will cover every case that has come under my notice —and in all of these not more than one or two

berries were found in any case. Chestnuts are a favorite food with them, and I have often found in a single craw quite a handful of them. They are also partial to acorns, especially those of the white oak, although I have frequently found those of the red oak—greatly to my surprise, as I could scarcely believe that they could swallow so large a pill as those I have found in their craw.

Berries of several varieties are freely eaten, especially whortleberries and blackberries, as well as grapes and thorn apples. The seeds of the skunk cabbage form a dainty dish, and it is not uncommon to find the partridge's craws filled with them. Grain of any kind is rarely eaten by them according to my observation.

With the exception of an occasional kernel of corn, I do not remember to have seen grain of any kind in their craws. This may also be said of the weed seeds that constitute so large a portion of food for the quail. During the winter, especially if snow covers the ground, almost the only food of the partridge is the buds of different trees and shrubs. Poplar, soft maple, yellow birch and a few other species are freely used by the partridge, while apple trees when

near their resorts appear to be an especial favorite. Indeed, in the early days farmers would tell you that the partridge greatly injured the apple crop by eating the buds, and we sometimes hear the same complaint now, although it was long ago proven to be wrong.

CHAPTER VII.

PARTRIDGE FOODS.

More than fifty years ago Prof. Agassiz requested me to send him the craws of a number of partridge that had been eating the buds from apple trees in order that the truth might be known. When winter came I sent him six craws that were fairly well filled, but heard nothing from him in relation to the matter until the following spring, when he added a postscript to a letter relating to fish, that the 130 buds of the apple tree were leaf buds with the exception of four, which were four more than he expected to find. I also made a number of examinations, but failed to find a single fruit bud.

We have good authority for believing that the partridge devours a large quantity of insect food, but I have never found positive proof that this

was true, owing perhaps to the fact that my examinations were made when this diet was out of season. I can readily believe this to be the case, however, when they are rearing their young as well as during the summer when there is a comparative scarcity of other foods.

I have no doubt that they eat many other things of which I have no knowledge; for I have frequently found in their craws material that I could not identify. I know that one partridge at least ate nearly the whole of a mushroom that was three inches in diameter, for I saw her do it. I was gathering the succulent dainties for my own eating, when I saw some twenty feet away a land tortoise eagerly devouring a particularly fine one. I sat down on a convenient boulder to watch the amusing performance, for the reptile was greedy. After it bit off more than it could chew it would draw back and elevate his head, shut his jaws together, and with an ecstatic roll of his eyes swallow a portion of it while the remainder rolled from each corner of his mouth and dropped to the ground. Then I noted that the gourmand was frugal as well as greedy, for with a twist of his head he

would bring an eye to bear on the fragments and then gather them in to the smallest piece, when the performance would be repeated with grotesque variations that were very amusing.

I had watched him for some time, when I saw, a few yards beyond him, a partridge walking with a stately grace that no other bird can equal, as she went straight to a large fresh-looking mushroom. When she came to a halt before it, with a graceful turn of her head she examined it a moment, and evidently finding it all right she took a dainty pick at it, and then settled down to business, eating in a ladylike manner that was in marked contrast to that of the hard-shelled glutton a short distance away. When she had finished the mushroom, with the exception of a few fragments, she resumed her stately walk, and soon disappeared in the dense undergrowth just beyond. I do not remember whether I gathered many mushrooms that day, but I do distinctly remember with deep satisfaction the great pleasure I enjoyed at this "al fresco" lunch of beauty and the beast.

I have no doubt that the partridge drinks water, but I have never caught one in the act,

although I have upon several occasions watched them as they daintily appropriated the rain drops that were clustered upon the leaves, and once in early morning, as I came to the edge of some woods, I stopped within twenty feet of some newly-plowed ground that extended to the woods. I had stood there but a moment when I saw a partridge come out of the woods to the freshly turned ground, when she halted a short time, and after taking a look around turned and came directly toward me to the strip of green turf next the plowed ground, when she began drinking the drops of dew which sparkled upon every blade of grass.

When she had apparently taken enough she began plucking and swallowing the grass until she caught sight of me, when with raised top knot, extended ruff and slightly expanded tail with majestic stride she slowly walked into the woods. This living picture often comes back to me, and I bless the kindly fortune that brought to me so great a pleasure.

I have survived several seasons when partridges were decidedly scarce. These periods come very irregularly. Occasionally but few

years will elapse, or perhaps more than two decades may pass before another period of scarcity.

One season when partridges were few and far between, I was working out a favorite cover near the home of a farmer friend, and had just shot a bird that proved to be the smallest one I ever saw, for it weighed only eleven ounces. At the report of the gun my friend joined me, and as the dog brought in the bird he took it and remarked that partridges were awful scarce, and then with a deprecatory glance at the diminutive specimen he rolled his eyes up added, "and small."

CHAPTER VIII.

ENEMIES OF THE PARTRIDGE.

That a large portion of the birds we mourn are dead I cannot believe, for it has very often been the case that the next season after a scarcity there has been one of plentiful supply in nearly all our coverts; many more, in fact, than could have possibly been bred by the apparent supply at the close of the previous season. I do not understand this, and therefore shall not undertake to explain it. Ticks undoubtedly destroy a number of birds, but I do not believe that the inroads of this pest amount to five per cent. of the supply. The individual birds, young or old, seldom pick up more than a very few of the parasites, and all of the old birds and many of the young ones have strength to

withstand the drain upon them, but occasionally a poor bird gets an extra number, and soon it falls a victim to this bloodthirsty enemy.

I was once strawberrying with my wife, when we found a brood of partridges about the size of quail. They took to flight as we came near them. One that appeared to be smaller than the others, flew only a few yards and settled in some low brush, where I soon found him apparently nearly exhausted. I had no trouble in taking him in my hand. As I was carrying him to show to my companion, I saw upon his neck three large ticks, and as I examined him closely I found a large number of small ones. After looking him over I began pulling out the ticks, when the little fellow with evident satisfaction closed his eyes and stretched his neck toward me, apparently well pleased with the attention. When I had rid him of more than twenty of the pests, and my companion had petted him awhile, she lowered him toward the ground, but he appeared to be unwilling to leave her, and as she gently placed him on the ground he came toward her, and when she extended her hand he rubbed his head against it with evident pleas-

ure. We were both delighted with this new and very pleasing experience of sylvan life, and often by the quiet fireside is the story repeated.

We have read much about the domestication of the partridge, and of an occasional instance where the result has in a measure been fairly successful. As a rule, the taming of the partridge is a very uncertain problem, although since the experience in the strawberry patch it has seemed to me that given a young bird with its neck swarming with ticks, the task could be easily accomplished.

Cold storms, at the time of hatching, will sometimes prove disastrous to the young brood; but, very fortunately, cold or long storms then are of rare occurrence. Crows occasionally pick up very young birds. I have caught them in the act several times. Hawks and foxes feast upon the tender flesh when they can procure it, but our wise bird usually knows how to take care of itself. So far as my observation goes they very seldom furnish a feast for these marauders.

I doubt that the fox can smell a partridge even when but a few feet away, and I also doubt

that even hawks can see them when they have a fair chance to hide.

I was once gathering chestnuts when I saw a large hawk sailing along just above the tree-tops. He suddenly wheeled around, and, with short beats of wing and head pointing downward, he eagerly looked for something that had evidently attracted his attention. After two or three minutes of this he alighted upon a branch near the top of a nearby tree and continued his search, but nothing came of it. I started for the place to discover the object that had caused him to perform those evolutions. The hawk took flight as I approached. When I came to the place three partridges flushed from the open ground where there was not a single bush to hide them, plainly showing me that when they saw the hawk they had crouched flat upon the dead leaves, and by remaining perfectly quiet had outwitted their enemy.

Since early boyhood I have been an ardent lover of fox hunting, and, long before I was big enough to carry a gun, I often joined the dogs in the chase. By cutting corners I usually managed to be well up at the finish. Many

times, when snow had fallen, I have started out in early morning alone. Taking the trail of a fox I have followed it until I routed him from the swampy bog where he had laid up for the day. Often the trail would show that the fox was hunting.

Several times I have flushed a partridge from its roosting place on the ground, only a few feet away from the trail, with never a sign that reynard had caught the faintest smell of it. This is the reason for the faith that is in me; that the fox is not possessed of the scenting powers that many give him credit for.

The natural history books tell us that the partridge is of a rufous color, and many of the birds show this, but there are others. In fact, there are so many different and varying shades of color in different specimens that I feel incompetent to give a description that will do justice to each form.

This difference in color is to be found in all sections where this bird abounds, and no one distinctive variety of color or marking predominates in any section that has come under my observation. I have often read that in cer-

tain localities partridges were of darker or lighter color than the standard, giving one the impression that the writers intended to convey the idea that this was a hard and fast rule for that particular section of country.

I have hunted quite extensively in every State east of the Mississippi River, where the partridge abounds, except Maine and Michigan, and as yet have failed to find even a limited section where these conditions obtain. In fact, I have invariably found that there is only one safe rule that governs this question, and that is not to judge of the color and markings of the bird in the bush by those of the bird in hand, for the chances are that before you have a score of birds in hand you will discover several very potent reasons that will cause you to change your mind.

Many years ago I was shooting in Pennsylvania on the slopes of the Allegheny Mountains with Mr. Baker, the inventor of the Baker gun. While eating our lunch the dog flushed a partridge which alighted on a tree nearly over us, and my companion brought it down. When he picked it up he uttered an exclamation of sur-

prise and said that he had never seen a bird like that and did not believe there was another in the world. The bird was of a decided reddish color, and I told him that it was by no means rare and was well known to partridge hunters as an "old red-tail." But I plainly saw that he did not take much stock in the statement. Two days later I bagged one very much like it, and in the evening I carried it to him, when he allowed that the best of us are liable to make mistakes.

In the early days I had a mania for exploring new territory and occasionally found a section where the first few birds would show a uniformity of color and markings, which would lead me to decide that I had found the country and the bird where one phase of color prevailed, but invariably the next few birds would disprove the whole thing, and so often has this occurred, that I am forced to believe that the conclusions of these writers are based on insufficient data.

CHAPTER IX.

BIRDS THAT FIGHT.

As a rule, the partridge is not quarrelsome, although I have seen two, or perhaps three, scraps among them, one of which was very interesting. Early one spring, I went to a birch knoll to cut some bean poles. I had been at work but a short time when a rustling in the bushes near me attracted my attention. I carefully went toward the spot to investigate, and was greatly surprised to see in an open place two partridges fighting with the fury of demons. They were at it in true gamecock style, and mixed it up in a manner that would have brought joy to the heart of even the most hardened lover of the ringside. Nearly all of the fracas was on the ground, but occasionally they would go into the air several feet, all the

time whacking each other with their wings and pecking with their bills, displaying a vim that plainly showed that the battle was no fake affair. It was a true fight that would not result in a draw.

One of the birds was a trifle larger than the other. Of course, my sympathy was with the smaller, and I was deeply grieved when after a rattling round he turned tail and ran away with the other not more than two feet behind him. My sorrow was of very brief duration, however, for my favorite suddenly turned and went for his antagonist with a spirit and dash that would not be denied, rolling him over and jumping on him with both feet, all the while whacking him in a business sort of way that soon took all the fight out of him. He rose in the air and took a bee line for the tall timber at his very best gait, with the champion close after him. I saw them last at the edge of the woods some fifty yards away with the big one flying better than he could fight, for he clearly had the best of the victor in respect to flight.

There was no more fighting among them, so far as I know, until some ten years later when

on a trout stream I again heard the sound of battle and was soon at the front; but I was a little too late, as with the exception of a short but decidedly brisk scrimmage, I saw nothing but a fleeting glimpse of the vanquished as he took to flight with the victor in close pursuit.

A few years ago, as I was walking along some woods, I heard sounds just beyond a dense growth of brush that led me to believe that a fight was on. I at once started for the scene, but the cover was so tangled that my progress was very slow. I was too late to see the wind up, for as I parted the branches at the edge of the opening, I caught sight of the two birds, one stealthily getting away from there while the other was intently searching for his foe in the opposite direction. This is positively all that I know about the fighting habits of my dearly loved bird.

I have been informed that partridges roost in trees, and many times I have been just as positively told that they roost on the ground. Many years ago I learned, after careful investigation, that both of these propositions are true, but whether the bird that perched in the tree

last night will sleep on the ground to-night is beyond me. Whether the bird that makes up its bed on the ground does so habitually or not is a mystery that I have been unable to solve.

Often when the snow is deep and free from crust, the partridge will plunge into it and cuddle down for a night's rest oftentimes a foot or more below the surface. I have seen this performance but once, and am not competent to say that this course is always pursued. I was at a runway at the edge of some woods waiting for the fox to come, when a partridge alighted on a limb some fifteen feet from the ground and not more than fifty feet away. There he sat for a few moments, when with closed wings he dove down and buried himself in the snow. This was perhaps an hour before sunset, and I have no doubt that he remained there all night; for when passing near the place two days later, I went to the spot and found unmistakable signs that he had remained in the hole a long time. I had known for some years that they burrowed in the snow. I had paid rather dear for the knowledge, for a man who should have known better than to play

upon some of the best feelings of my nature, gave me a circumstantial account of famous times he had enjoyed in capturing lots of the birds by clapping a scoop net over those holes.

This looked very plausible to me, and as there was a foot and a half of snow on the ground, I arose early the next morning, and taking a dip net that belonged to my uncle, I started for the woods with high hopes. It was heart-breaking traveling through the knee-deep snow, but thoughts of the birds I was to secure buoyed up my spirits and I pressed on with cheering hope that a great bag would be my reward. After a toilsome tramp of an hour or more, I saw just ahead of me the anxiously looked-fore hole in the snow, and with renewed hope and restored strength, I tightened my grip upon the handle of the net, and stealthily approaching the spot very carefully, placed it over the hole. This was all? No, not all, for my feelings were deeply wounded and my heart was sore over the disappointment, for I had fully believed that I should surely capture a bird.

CHAPTER X.

DRUMMING.

THE drumming of the grouse is a characteristic of this bird that, so far as I know, is common to no other species. Nearly every one who lives in a section of country where the partridge abounds is familiar with the strangely weird music of the love call of this beautiful bird. That it is a love call in spring time I know, whatever its object may be when the love season has passed, for I have heard them drum at all seasons, including every month in the year, and I have upon several occasions heard them late at night.

The sound is more frequently heard in early spring and again in September and October, when on a still, balmy day they may be heard in every direction. It has fallen to the lot of

comparatively few to witness this very striking performance, as our wary bird at this time is peculiarly susceptible to the slightest noise. At the least suspicion of intruding footsteps he at once takes to flight or skulks away through the convenient thicket.

The partridge usually drums upon a log, although I have seen them go through the performance several times upon rocks and stumps, as well as on the bare ground. I shall never forget my first experience when, a boy, I tried to locate the author of the mysterious sound that came from a small clearing next to some woods. The clearing had grown up to sprouts about six feet in height, and I determined to investigate and obtain a view of the performance and learn just how so small a bird could make so great a noise.

I had been told, and fully believed, that they always drummed on a hollow log, and that the noise was made by beating the sides of the log with their wings. I had often explored the clearing, for it was a famous place for wintergreen berries, and I knew there was a large hollow log near the place that the noise ap-

peared to come from. When I reached the edge of the cover, I got down upon all fours and stealthily crept toward the log until it was not more than twenty feet distant. I could plainly see every portion of the log, but there was no bird on it, and I was about to rise to my feet when the muffled thunder of the first drumbeat held me spell-bound until the performance was over, when with bated breath and wildly throbbing heart, I noiselessly crept to the log, as the noise was evidently some little distance beyond it. When I reached the log I raised my head, so that my eyes were just above it, when I saw the bird some thirty feet distant standing upon a stone, but he undoubtedly saw or heard me, for with a thunderous roar he took his departure for the adjacent woods.

The hollow log theory had entire possession of my mind, and I decided that the bird had run from it at my approach. A close examination, however, conclusively proved to me that he had never set foot upon it, for its entire surface was closely covered with small scaly portions of bark that crumbled and fell to the

RUFFED GROUSE STRUTTING.

ground at the lightest touch. Then it came to me that I heard him drumming beyond the log, and the probability seemed almost certain that he had done this upon the stone. I at once proceeded to examine it. I found it to be about three feet in length by two in width, nearly the shape of an inverted platter and about a foot in height. Not more than half convinced, I determined to go to the bottom of this and by thorough investigation to learn the whole truth of the matter. Selecting a small bushy point, about thirty feet from the end of the log and the same distance from the stone, I cut away branches enough to make a small peep-hole, and then cutting a path in the rear to an open place, I returned home and impatiently waited for the time when I should again hear the mysterious sound.

It was nearly noon the next day when I heard it, and I at once started at full speed for the place, and was soon at the little opening, when I crawled along the path and had nearly reached the pine, when I again heard him, and hastening along, I looked through the little opening just in time to see the finish. He was at the middle

of the stone, and as I caught sight of him, was settling down into a crouching position, and, except for an occasional spasmodic jerk of his head, appeared to be taking a doze. This continued for quite a while, then he rose, and standing apparently on tiptoe with his head thrown well back and ruff erect, he spread his wings to their full extent, and with a quick motion brought them together in front; then after about a second he again brought them together, and this he repeated with ever-increasing speed until the finish, which was of a cyclonic order, and he was the most animated owner of feathers that I ever beheld. This performance was a revelation to me, and, although entirely different from what I had expected, I was perfectly satisfied. Gone forever was my belief in the hollow log theory, and gone for ever my faith in the man who had told the fairy tale.

How many similar tales I have found false I cannot say, but they have been very many. I have witnessed this performance at several times, but it was always very nearly the same, except that the surroundings were often very

dissimilar. One thing that struck me as very peculiar was that the noise appeared to sound louder when half a mile away than it did when so near.

CHAPTER XI.

MATING AND NESTING.

I HAVE somewhere heard that the partridge is devoted to its mate, is faithful unto death. The truth of the matter is that, after the love season has passed, the male has absolutely nothing to do with family affairs, and that the statement that the birds go "wandering hand in hand through sylvan groves" is a mere fancy flight of some carpet sportsman's imagination.

I once believed this, and I well remember that if, when shooting, I killed but one of a pair that rose in front of me, I felt very sad to think that the survivor would hereafter sadly wander through the "sylvan groves" all alone. I therefore made it a hard and fast rule to bag them both, if possible. I once brought down

a brace that rose nearly at the same time, and when the dog brought them in, a glance threw me into a state of doubt, and when I made an examination I found that they were both males. This set me to thinking, and for a long time afterward when I bagged a pair I at once examined them, and in a very large majority of cases both proved to be of one sex, with a large preponderance of males. While this may not be evidence positive enough to convince the sentimental reader, it fully satisfied me, so far as that "hand in hand" theory was concerned. Later, every particle of this sentimental feeling was obliterated when I discovered that our beautiful bird is a polygamist, or, at least, he was in Connecticut some sixty years ago, for on several occasions I "caught them with the goods."

One spring morning I was watching a partridge drumming on a log, when the hen bird came from the thicket into the open spot near the log. After receiving the attention of her mate, she strolled back in the direction from which she came, while he again mounted upon the log, and in the course of some ten min-

utes his love note was again filling the air with its music. Just as he closed the second performance, I saw another female come into the opening and walk toward him, when he came down from the log and paid his devoirs to the newcomer. This was so entirely different from what I had always believed that I experienced quite a turn, and tried to persuade myself that the last was the same bird that had first appeared upon the scene, but there was no getting around the fact that the first comer had black bands across her tail, while the second one sported those of a bright chestnut color, and I was forced to believe that my best bird was a Mormon. Lingering doubt that this might have been a rare occurrence was completely dispelled the following spring, when more than five miles from this place, I had opportunity again to witness the same performance, when three female birds came to the trysting place; and a few days later I again saw two come at nearly the same instant. These incidents of course dispelled the illusion that the partridge is "faithful unto death."

I have never found the male partridge any-

where in the vicinity of a young brood, although I have often with my dog beat out a wide circle entirely around them, in order to test the matter to my satisfaction.

It is the same when the female begins her housekeeping. She has no assistance from her "mate." I do not believe that she ever sees him unless perhaps by accident during the time devoted to family affairs.

Her nest is of very simple construction—merely a slight depression in the ground that she makes by wallowing, using her wings to remove the soil, or she finds a little hollow that suits her purpose. This with a few leaves for lining is all she requires. The nest is made in early April. It is usually under a protecting bush, or near a fallen log, or beside a rock or stump. It is usually found in sprout land or near the edge of woods, although I have sometimes found them in heavy timber at some distance from the edge. She begins to lay when her nest is ready, usually about a dozen eggs, although I once saw a nest with seventeen. I have found them with less than half this number.

I never succeeded in demonstrating to my sat-

isfaction just how long she sets, owing to the fact that I was unable to determine the exact time when her duties began. My first attempt resulted in the appearance of the brood in less than two weeks, and upon other occasions the result was very unsatisfactory. I have examined quite a number of nests after the birds were gone, and have invariably found that every egg had hatched.

When the bird is sitting on her nest, it is almost impossible for the human eye to see her. I have repeatedly spent several minutes before I could locate her, even when I knew to a foot just where the nest was situated. She is so nearly the color of the leaves that cover the ground, and remains so perfectly motionless that she escapes observation from any one passing by unless they come too near her, when she at once takes wing. Even then it is often impossible to see the eggs, for the first motion of her wings spreads the leaves over them, completely covering them from sight. I once found a nest the last day of May, and the next morning I again visited it, but nothing remained save the empty shells. Upon my return I struck for

a wood road that led in the direction I wished to go, when I came across the brood, but I had only a fleeting glance at them, for at the warning note of the mother bird every fluffy ball disappeared from sight. Then the old bird, with wings, legs and back apparently broken, floundered past me, and with many queer contortions very slowly worked her way down the path. Wishing to see the whole of the performance, I followed her slowly at first but at gradually increasing speed until I was walking at my best, but she kept just ahead of me until quite a distance from her charge, when she suddenly recovered from her grievous wounds, and with quickly beating wings, she mounted in air and was off like a shot. Gratified at witnessing her well planned ruse, I returned to the vicinity of the brood, greatly wondering that those tiny chicks, only a few hours old, should understand the import of that warning note, and that they should be able to so quickly disappear in so open a spot. Seating myself behind a spreading bush a few yards away, I awaited further developments. I was not kept long in suspense, for I soon heard the

plaintive music of the call of the mother, when, as by magic, the little forms came apparently from out the ground and with eager haste scuttled away in the direction of the loving call. I sat there a long time musing upon the wonderful display of intelligence manifested by these newly born fledglings, and wondering why it is that we poor human beings must wait for years before we can comprehend such things, and even then I fear that very many of us pay scant heed to the danger warning or the loving call.

The mother bird broods her young just as a hen broods her chickens. The diet of the little fellows is one of the mysteries that I have been unable to solve, but it must be of a very nourishing character, for they increase in stature at a wonderful rate, attaining nearly their full growth in ten or twelve weeks.

CHAPTER XII.

SNARING IN EARLY DAYS.

CENTURIES before the advent of the shotgun, partridges were caught in snares. This method is in use at the present day. The farmer's boy who sets a few for his amusement does not deplete the stock to an appreciable extent, but the expert market hunter will very nearly exterminate the birds throughout his entire range of snares.

I know that it is sinful to set snares, but time was when I thought differently. In my early days, before I knew anything about a gun, I had considerable experience in this line, but as soon as I was big enough to carry a gun, I became convinced of the wickedness of snaring and of course at once stopped it.

My first snare was set more than sixty years

ago, but as my thoughts go back to that bright winter's day, the scene rises before me as fresh as though it were yesterday. At my home, Thanksgiving Day was the great day of all the year. We always trimmed up the house with evergreens, had a turkey with all the fixings, and such pies and cake! not but that I have just as good now, for I was lucky enough to find a little girl who can cook just as well as mother did.

When I was nearly eleven years old, Thanksgiving week came, and on Monday father started for Hartford, leaving us to make preparation for Thanksgiving, saying that he would be home early on Wednesday, and would bring the turkey. On Tuesday night there came a severe snow-storm that left about a foot of snow on the ground, and we had grave fears that father would not be able to come on time, as forty miles of such traveling would be too much for the horse to accomplish.

Mother thought we had better make our preparations, as possibly he might come, so I started for the hemlocks about a half mile away to procure the evergreen for decorating the

house. Wallowing through the deep snow, I soon reached the place, which was a splendid grove of stately hemlocks that stood singly and in groups, each tree or group forming a beautiful pyramid from the ground to a height of fifty to sixty feet. I shall never forget the dazzling beauty of that group of cones on that bright sunny morning, as they stood there in silent grandeur with the living green of their foliage half obscured with the fleecy snow, and their long slender arms gracefully drooping under its weight, while in the foreground was a clump of tall birches also weighted down with snow until their tops nearly rested on the ground. The whole formed a picture that all the years have not dimmed.

As I approached the nearest tree, I was startled by the noise and flutter of a large number of grouse that had been taking shelter on the bare ground under the tree. I have no doubt that there were fifty of them, perhaps more, for in those days there were grouse. While watching them the thought came to me that perhaps I could capture some of them, and the longer I dwelt upon the thought, the more

I wanted one or two of them to take home with me. I had not much faith in the promised turkey, and it seemed to me that a brace of these birds would help out with the dinner on the morrow in a most satisfactory manner; so I set my wits to work to solve the question as to how I should accomplish the wished for capture. A few days before this, I had accompanied a young friend when he had visited his snares and had taken a mental note of the manner in which they were arranged. As recollection of this came to me, I felt that the problem was solved, and that some of these beautiful birds would grace the empty platter. I began to overhaul my pockets in search of string, but all that I could find was a solitary bit of common wrapping twine, not more than a foot and a half in length, just about enough for one snare. I had intended to go into the business of snaring on rather an extensive scale, but the limited quantity of string obliged me to modify my views, so I worked with the material at hand and soon had two stakes cut and stuck into the ground in the form of the letter A with the string tied securely around the top and a slip-

noose at the other end which I spread open and fastened in the orthodox manner to nicks in the side of the sticks. Then with other sticks and trash I formed wings on each side of the snare some three or four feet in length, and when all was ready, I went around the tree under which the birds had flown and again routed them and succeeded in driving a large portion of them under my tree. When I rushed back to the spot I found to my intense wonder and delight that one of the birds had the noose fast around its neck, and I soon had it safe in my hands.

While admiring the beautiful bird, the thought struck me that I must kill it, but my whole nature revolted at the idea, and as I debated the question, laying, I fear, undue stress upon that empty platter at home, I inadvertently held fast hold on the bird with the string so tightly drawn about its neck that the matter was settled before I had arrived at a conclusion, and it was with no little surprise and I must add satisfaction that I discovered that the bird was dead. This result removed a heavy load from my mind, and I at once released the noose from its neck, and again adjusted it, and lay-

ing my treasure at the foot of the tree, I started for another drive, but this time did not succeed in making a capture, as I was too eager and rushed to the place before the birds had time to move around.

At the next drive, I waited a few minutes, and then approaching carefully, I saw a bird run through the door and suddenly bring up and flutter as it came to the end of the string. Then I made my rush, and so hardened had my feelings become by success that my conscience pricked me but little as I shut my eyes and pulled on the bird until I thought it safe to lay it beside its companion.

After this I made several unsuccessful drives as the birds were becoming scarce, and I was obliged to visit several of the trees before I could get a half dozen under my tree, but I finally succeeded in capturing a third victim, which I deliberately strangled with scarcely a feeling of remorse. I have a distinct recollection that I then wondered why this should be so, and that I tried to reason out the matter and find a solution of the problem, but came to no satisfactory conclusion.

When I had secured my third bird, it was past the noon hour and high time that I was on my way home, so I tied my three birds together with the string that I had used for my snare, then breaking off a large armful of hemlock boughs, I shouldered them, and carrying my birds in the other hand, with a proud heart and light footsteps, I started back by the path I had made when coming.

Just as I was passing through the barway into the village street, I met a Quaker neighbor whose countenance lighted up when he saw the birds, and in a cheerful but rather surprised tone he exclaimed, "Thee has done well," Then the pleasant smile on his face faded out, the corners of his mouth drew down, and the cheerful tone slowly changed to one of reproachful regret as he added, "If thee has not stolen them."

This was a poser. I did not understand it at all, and I bothered over it for several days and finally went to him and asked for an explanation. He told me that he had been brought up to believe that anything taken from the land of another without paying for it or at least

obtaining permission from the owner was stolen.

Now this bothered me more than the other, and after thinking it over a while, I went to the owner of the land and told him the whole story, Quaker and all, and just how I felt about it. "Well," said the old man as he patted me on the head, "I am glad that you have told me this, and when you want to set snares on my land, you just go on and set them, and it will be all right. I never hunt or trap and don't care a snap who kills the game. I never forbid any one hunting on my land, but at the same time I should feel much better about it if the hunters would only ask permission as you have done. I think that about all the farmers feel the same."

This little sermon sank deep into my heart and I have endeavored to live up to its teachings all through life. I know that I have, by pursuing this course, made many warm friends as well as obtained much good shooting that otherwise I should never have found.

When I carried the birds into the house and showed them to my mother, her astonishment

and delight were unbounded. As she examined them and bestowed unstinted praise upon me, I resolved, deep down in my heart, that I would become a hunter. In order that I might start fair with a good outfit, I went to my uncle's room, and overhauling his fishing tackle, selected a line that I thought was about the thing for snares and put it in my pocket. Then, with a mind at rest, so far as equipment was concerned, I returned to the kitchen and assisted in dressing the birds, which were stuffed and placed in the pantry ready to take the place of that turkey, in case father failed to come.

At twelve o'clock, on Thanksgiving Day, he had not arrived. The birds were laid in a row in the dripping pan, with a thin slice of fat salt pork on each breast. They were then put in the oven, and just as mother had pronounced them almost done and was about to set the table, father drove into the yard. As I started for the door mother bade me say nothing about the birds, so I kept quiet and busied myself with taking care of the horse while father, after taking the paper off the turkey and showing it

to me, carried it into the house. Mother at once began getting it ready for the oven, while father went to his room to change his clothes, never mistrusting that there was anything out of the usual course, and thinking that he would have to wait for his dinner until the turkey was cooked.

You can imagine his surprise when he came from his room to find us seated around the table with all the good things complete, except that instead of the turkey those three birds were smoking on the platter. I shall never forget his look of pleased surprise as he seated himself at the table and served the dainty dish amid a perfect avalanche of words from all five of us as we gave him full particulars of the whole performance, nor shall I ever forget his after-dinner speech, nor the look he gave me as he turned to me and said, "Well, my boy, I must thank you for the very best Thanksgiving dinner I ever enjoyed." It is perhaps needless to say that this made me very happy, and I again resolved that I would become a hunter.

At that time I had no conception of the true

meaning of the word. I only knew that so far as I had progressed in the science of woodcraft, the pleasurable excitement attending success and the pride that swelled my heart as words of praise from loved ones fell upon my ears were very acceptable.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ADVENT OF THE GUN.

HAND in hand with the shotgun came the dawn of the millennium for the sportsman, and it is a most interesting study to trace, step by step, the evolution of the sports of the field from that period to the present day. Within the memory of man, what wonderful strides have been made toward perfection in the implements accessory to our woodland sports! What a vast army of enthusiasts have enrolled themselves under the sportsman's banner until there is scarcely a hamlet in all this broad land that cannot boast one or many expert wing-shots.

I well remember that, when I was a boy, the man who could "shoot flying" was looked upon as a wonder, and pointed out to strangers as one

far above the common herd, but now "the woods are full of them."

The noble sport of field shooting has done much for the men and boys of the last two generations. It has enabled them to store up a stock of vitality that has done them good service in time of need. The forms of those who practice it will not be prematurely decayed, their minds will not easily be warped by worldly cares; for there is a stimulus in the air of the forest that fills their veins with a potent power to withstand the debilitating effects of the strenuous life. Not only this, but the average boy must perforce, in some manner, work off the surplus steam that all boys are possessed of—at least, all boys that are worth while. It has been my experience that in many instances these high-strung youngsters, who did not take to the woods, have worked off this surplus steam in a manner that was very distressing to their friends, and far from being conducive to their own well being.

So when your boy asks for a gun, thankfully place it in his hands and wish him good luck. If you can, lead him to the chosen haunt of the

partridge and get him thoroughly interested in the pursuit of this beautiful bird. My word for it, neither you nor the boy will ever regret it.

The young sportsman—and, for that matter, the old one, too—when they first seek the haunts of game, have a discouraging difficulty in reconciling the results of their outing with the bright anticipation that illuminated their horizon when with buoyant hopes and eager steps they set forth to conquer the world of sport, of which dreams and wakeful thought had, with a free hand, drawn such wonderful pictures.

The tyro usually expects to flush game at every step, and his nerves are keyed up to a tension that will nearly always snap when at last the bird is routed. Now this tension is all right; for one of the most important rules to observe when seeking the partridge is, to be always ready; but one's nerves should also be ready, and when one has so schooled them that the sudden rise will not unsteady them, one has taken a long stride on the road to success.

In seeking for the partridge, there is no rule that will surely lead you to them; for often a thorough search of the best places will fail to

find them; and then in places that are most unlikely they will suddenly rise, and, if one is not ready, he will most assuredly score a lost opportunity.

A good dog is indispensable for successful pursuit of this wily bird, and the better the dog the more satisfactory will be one's share of the sport. Good dogs are fairly abundant; but the first-class partridge dog is very hard to find. I have owned and shot over hundreds, and have seen many really good ones, but those that were strictly of the first class I can number on my fingers with room to spare. The reader may think my standard too high, but one day afield with an animal that comes up to the mark will convince one that it is no dream that prompts my estimate.

It is a common belief that the partridge dog must be slow, with stealthy, noiseless footsteps, approaching his birds with a cat-like tread that will not frighten them. I once fully believed this, as the first really good dog that I saw possessed these characteristics in a marked degree; but later I owned a dog whose style of hunting was most decidedly the opposite of this. He

was fast as a ghost. He made nearly as much racket in going through the covers as would an ox team; but he found his birds and pointed them in grand style. He almost invariably held them fast, for they would lie for him like stones.

Why it is that birds will lie for some dogs regardless of the manner in which they do their work, and will not do so for others that apparently have the same style, passes my comprehension. I only know that something is wrong with the dog, but what it is I am unable to say.

In selecting your partridge dog, do not hastily condemn the slow, stealthy action, nor the bold, speedy work, for either will show you satisfactory sport, provided the ability to hold the birds is a part of their accomplishments, and they have learned to work to the gun. The partridge dog must be born that way. This, with plenty of practice under proper tuition, is the whole secret of the matter.

The partridge is often found in out-of-the-way places that the novice fails to discover. The thorn bush, perhaps a gunshot away from the cover, does not look a likely place for them;

but they are often there nevertheless. The grapevine that covers a few low-growing bushes is a favorite place for them, although it may be some little distance from the cover. The white-oak tree that stands a short distance away in the open ground is a chosen resort for them when acorns are ripe, and I have frequently found from one to a half dozen birds in such places. The fence that leads from the cover is also frequented by them, especially when there is a hedgerow beside it; in fact, there are so many out-of-the-way places where they may occasionally be found, that it is worth while to look them all over. I have often at nearly the close of day flushed a bird from the top of a wall or stump, log or other perch that would be three or four feet above the ground, but usually they would rise out of shot, as from their elevated position they could readily see when it was proper to take their departure. Investigation showed me that the bird would nearly always be found upon the same perch at about the same time, on successive days, and after this discovery the rest was easy; for all that was necessary was boldly to advance to-

ward the place from the direction that they would naturally take, shaping one's course so that it would appear that one was going to pass by some twenty yards to one side. Straight powder will do the rest, for one will usually have an easy shot.

In October and November, upon still, sunny days, partridges may frequently be found by the side of the road that passes through the cover or upon the sunny side of a cart path or little opening in the woods, where they usually lie close until one is quite near them. One season, some thirty years ago, I was entirely out of a dog. As I could only devote an occasional day to my favorite sport, "My days were sad, my nights were drear." Although my nights and Sundays were devoted to making solemn resolutions that next season I would have matters arranged more to my satisfaction, I was far from being in my normal condition. In November when the beautiful Indian summer came to us I could stand the strain no longer, so upon a bright, balmy morning, with my wife seated beside me in the buggy, we took to the woods. My horse was well trained for this

work, and my companion could handle the ribbons better than any one I ever met; for she had learned the lesson upon the broad open fields, when driving for plover.

On this day we were fortunate; birds were very plentiful, and I was blessed with straight powder. We flushed sixteen birds and brought them all home, using the second barrel only twice. Every one was found within less than five miles from where I am now sitting; indeed, more than one-half of them were inside the city limits. This was a red letter day, never to be forgotten; and as I recall the very many glorious days that have fallen to my lot, this one has a prominent place in the front rank. I have tried this method perhaps a dozen times, but have never succeeded in scoring one-half the number that fell to me upon this occasion.

The successful partridge hunter when searching for his favorite bird, has both eyes wide open, especially when he is exploring unknown territory. It is often the case that even in well stocked localities the wandering habit of these birds leads them away from their usual haunts, and a well trained dog in vain beats out every

foot of the inviting looking cover without even a smell of them to reward his unwearied efforts. It is in such cases that a watchful eye is helpful. It should carefully scan each likely looking spot as one passes through the cover and should note the absence or presence of tell-tale signs that will almost surely lead one to a correct conclusion. Should the absence or infrequency of these plain tokens show that there were very few or perhaps no birds here, at once seek other places and with ever-renewed faith and hope, try, try again.

Should one, however, discover fairly plentiful fresh sign, one's eye brightens as with quickened pulse, a firmer grip upon the gun and assuring faith that the silent tip is straight, one carefully searches each outlying patch of brush, each hedgerow or fence, and even all the unlikely looking places that could by any possibility hold the birds, until at last one stands with flushed cheeks and countless cold chills running up and down one's spine, gazing with delight upon the living statue whose every hair assures that he has found them at last. Not the least pleasing part of this performance is the proud satisfac-

tion, as one realizes that one's well-earned skill in woodcraft has brought its reward.

There are many of these silent tokens of the presence of birds scattered through the cover that the practiced eye will readily detect. One of the most prominent of them, perhaps, is the readily seen wallow hole where the partridge has taken its dust bath. This depression in the soft ground is similar to that made by the barnyard fowl for the same purpose, except that it is much smaller. The places best loved by the bird for this purpose are the sunny borders of covers or open places within them and where there is a bit of bare mellow ground, or the decayed dry remains of stump or fallen log, and often upon the side of a deserted ant hill.

CHAPTER XIV.

MYTHS DISPROVED.

MANY years ago, I read a well told tale of the preternatural wisdom of my favorite that made a lasting impression upon me. According to the tale, there was once upon a time a wise old partridge that by some sad mischance had become infested with lice, and how to get rid of the annoying pests, bothered her; but she was equal to the occasion, for after sitting down and scratching her head, she took a good long think and then suddenly jumped to her feet, exclaimed "Eureka!" and at her best gait ran straight to a large ant heap, on top of which she began to scratch and wallow to the dismay of its many thousand inhabitants, who at once flocked to the scene to give battle to the disturber of their peaceful home. No sooner had the infuriated

host of ants attacked the intruder than the lice were discovered, when with joyful shouts the whole army began to devote its energies to securing the prisoners, and in almost no time the last one was dragged to the depths of the dark dungeon below. Then with a glad smile illuminating her cheerful countenance, our wise bird shook the dust of the ant heap from her feathers, and took her departure. The tale deeply interested me, and for two or three years I examined hundreds of ant hills in order to find out if there were other birds as wise as this one; but, although I found a number that had been used by the birds for their dirt bath, they were without exception uninhabited.

One more item in this connection and we will dismiss the tale. Partridges are never lousy.

There are other signs of the presence of these birds that the eye, trained to see them, will readily discover. Often there will be a discarded feather, their droppings, or perhaps a footprint upon a patch of sand, and, upon moist ground where the skunk cabbage thrives, the broken seed pods divested of their contents will in-

variably tell you that the partridge has been there, for there is no other bird that eats this highly seasoned viand.

From about the middle of October until early spring, partridges flock together, often in large droves; at least this is the case in country where they are not much disturbed. It is often the case that the hunter, late in the season, if not fortunate enough to find their gathering place, fails to find a tithe of the birds that he knows have occupied the ground only a short time previous. If he is not well informed as to the habits of the bird in this respect, a portion at least of his journey home is devoted to anathematizing hunters, hawks and foxes for the utter desolation that abounds.

I was fox-hunting one day in November, when I ran into a pack of more than fifty birds, and the next day, with a chosen companion, we were early at the place but it was in vain that we searched every bit of cover, not a bird could we find. Finally, when it was past the middle of the afternoon we came out of the last cover, and stood in the open upon a steep hillside trying to decide as to the best course to

take. At the foot of the hill, sixty yards below us, lay the top of a large chestnut tree that had been cut down in the summer, for it was still covered with leaves, but we paid no attention to it until the dog stuck his nose in the air, and rising to his feet drew down the hill and came to a beautiful point not more than twenty feet from the tree.

Without exchanging a word we picked our way down the steep hillside, my companion toward the butt of the tree, while I approached the top. Before I had reached the desired position a contumacious bird, with malice prepense, burst through the dead leaves, and at her best speed came straight at my head, apparently well knowing that of all shots this one was least liked by me because I nearly always scored a miss; and although now I tried my best, this one was no exception to the rule. I tried her again and saw her double up just at the edge of the cover, where to our surprise she struck in the crotch of a small beech tree where she remained until the battle was over.

At the report of the gun several more flushed, and my companion scored a pretty double. As

they appeared loath to leave the shelter of the old treetop, getting up one or two at a time, we had more sport than had ever fallen to our lot over one point; for the dog remained staunch until the last one was routed, when with a glance at me and an expressive wag of his tail he galloped up the steep hill to where the first bird was still hanging in the crotch and with a mighty spring secured it. Then he went for the others.

When the job was finished we had eighteen beauties laid side by side on the grass. Neither of us had kept any count, but we knew that the dog had marked every one, and when he brought the last one and laid it in my hands and looked up at me with sparkling eyes and wagging tail, telling us in language that we well understood that this was glorious sport, we knew that it was useless to search for more, although my companion insisted that there must be more than fifty still ungathered. I soon convinced him that the dog was right by explaining that sport like this was not conducive to clear judgment. He modified the statement by saying that we had sport enough for a hundred, and in this I fully agreed. I have enjoyed very many delightful

interviews with my peerless bird, but never before or since have I been in quite so hot a corner as that.

My companion made a peculiar shot that caused us no little astonishment. He pulled for a bird, but the cap failed to explode, and as he gave her the other barrel a bluejay, that was flying along more than twenty feet beyond the bird and fully that distance out of range, shut her wings and came down stone dead. On examination of the jay we found that a pellet had struck her in the head, and we finally decided that this shot must have become jammed out of true in some manner to cause it to diverge so widely from the straight line.

While discussing what was the matter we were joined by a farmer friend who lived near, and after giving him the facts in the case he decided that there was nothing singular or out of the way, for all of us have to go when the time comes, and evidently the bluejay's time was up. This started my companion. He was always wound up and only needed something of this nature to set him going, so he gave us a complete insight into all the secrets of nature and

the working of immutable laws, finally winding up with the statement that in accordance with what was ordained in the beginning the jay had met its fate. The conduct of our farmer friend was all that could be desired, and at the close he oracularly exclaimed, "Boys, it was ordained in the beginning that you should come over to the house and have some cider."

CHAPTER XV.

AUTUMN HABITS.

LATE in the fall there is a gathering of the partridge clans that is not generally understood by many who are fairly well up in the knowledge pertaining to the successful pursuit of partridges. The hen partridge usually chooses a place that suits her, in which to rear her brood. She does not consider the views or tastes of the human expert, who often wonders that so many ideal spots for this purpose are desolate. It is for this reason that valley and plain as well as hillside and summit are places chosen almost equally by these fastidious birds, in which to make a home while family cares hold their sway. In these strenuous times the lowland coverts as well as those that are on higher grounds, if they are not too difficult to work, are completely shot out early in the season, and

after each hunter has beaten them out—perhaps several times—and found to his disgust that there is nothing there, he leaves the barren spot and seeks in distant localities for some elysium where some birds may be had. There is still, however, balm in Gilead, for, thanks to the wise old mother birds who have reared their broods in inaccessible places in the hills and mountains, these low lying coverts will soon again resound with the music of swiftly beating pinions, and again will the sportsman who is "up to snuff" revel in the joys of delightful days among the birds—the scenes he loves so well.

At some period in late fall, many of the birds that were reared in places unvisited by gunners meander along the little brooks and runs that lead down the mountain, working their way to the more congenial scenes below, often if undisturbed in their pilgrimage, arriving at the lowland coverts in a goodly covey. I have studied this matter for many years with a zeal that merits better result, but I am unable to give even meagre particulars of why the time of their coming is so uncertain.

I only know that they come sometime in the

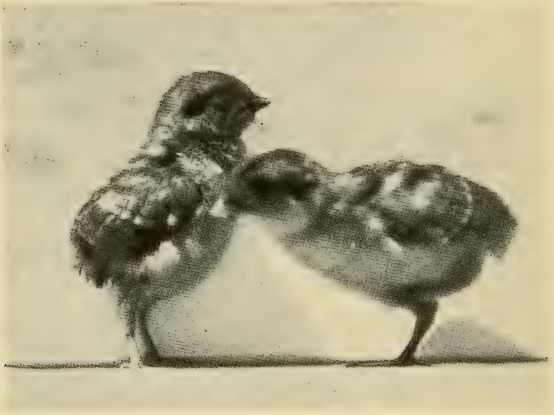
late fall; except in one instance when no birds had arrived in three of my favorite covers on the last day of the open season, which was then the last day of the year. I was much worried over this, and feared that the birds were dead, and when another month had passed, and I could not find them, I was sure that evil had befallen them. Two weeks later, however, which was past the middle of February, a friend told me his spaniel had flushed a number of partridges near the road in one of these covers, and I was again happy. The next day I drove to the place and my dog found more than a score. We then visited the other covers and found them abundantly stocked.

There is a valley in one of the most picturesque sections of the Berkshire Hills that has been a favorite resort of mine for years. This valley is more than a mile in length and very irregular, from ten to one hundred rods in widtb, nearly covered with a rather sparse growth of alders and witch hazel, interspersed with numerous patches of green grass with a beautiful trout stream winding through it, making an ideal home for the woodcock and partridge.

On a bright October day, in the early sixties, I first visited this beautiful spot, with a newly made friend, who had kept it for his own private use for several years.

Leaving our team at the home of a farmer friend of my companion we struggled through a half mile of very rough country to the lower end of the valley. When we finally broke cover I stood spellbound for a time gazing at the beautiful scene to the delight of my companion, who finally took off his hat and waving his arm toward the upper end begged to introduce me to his woodcock parlor. This name was very appropriate, for a sweeter spot for the longbills I never saw. Best of all, the birds knew it as well, for during the years that I have visited the place I have never failed to find a goodly number at home. Partridges were not very plentiful, although we found a few.

I persuaded my companion to visit the spot again in late November, when the birds would be sure to be there, for food was abundant. This was an off year, and partridges were very scarce. We nearly gave up the trip, but we finally decided to try it. I shall never forget the



RUFFED GROUSE ONE WEEK OLD.

first point old Mack made that day. We were descending the last little gorge at the foot of the valley when the dog followed a shelf of rock until he came to the edge, and as he gathered to jump down he caught scent of partridges and stiffened on point. He had gone a trifle too far, however, and he tumbled over the edge, falling to the ground nearly flat on his back. But he held his point, to the consternation of my companion, who pronounced him dead or in a fit. I had seen Mack perform some pretty queer antics in the way of pointing, but this seemed a little beyond the limit. I went toward him, but as soon as I had a fair view I knew it was all right. I motioned my companion to a place of vantage, but before he had taken more than a dozen steps a score of partridges rose just beyond him and he made a beautiful double, while I scored on the only one that came my way. The others went up the steep hillside with the exception of one that settled in a patch of alders beside the brook.

We followed this bird, and when we gathered it in I made one of the most sensational shots that I was ever guilty of. When she rose I

dropped her into the brook with a broken wing. She did not swim much like a duck, but assisted by the current she made fair progress, coming toward me until not more than fifteen feet away, when she saw me, and changing her course paddled for the other shore which was so soft and muddy that I, fearing her plumage would become soiled, shot her head off. When she toppled over we discovered that I had killed a partridge and a 1½ pound trout at one shot.

Birds were very plentiful in the valley that day. I have no doubt that we flushed more than a hundred. We took our lunch near the head of the valley, seated upon a large flat stone, near the junction of two little rills that came down the steep hillsides. I well knew my companion was an ardent lover of nature, a jolly good fellow as well as a good shot, but I did not know until now that he was a poet, and was a bit surprised when in response to a remark I made about the gentle swaying of the tall birches over head, he gave me this:

"There's music in the whispering breeze,
And in the rippling rill,
When trees are saying things to trees,
And rill trills sweet to rill."

CHAPTER XVI.

STRANGE SHOTS.

I HAVE made and witnessed many queer shots. Upon several occasions I have gathered in birds that were never touched by a shot. I was once shooting with the late Ethan Allen when I flushed a partridge that flew directly toward him. As he was not more than fifty yards away I could not shoot, and a second later another bird flushed wild, and as she would give him a fair chance I remained quiet and watched the proceeding. When he fired at the second bird, the first one was nearly over his head. At the report of the gun, it dodged and blundered into the top of a birch and came into the jaws of his dog. He took it and wrung its neck, supposing that I had wounded it, and it was not until I showed him that my gun was still loaded that he would believe I had not shot it.

Perhaps the most remarkable shot of this nature that ever came to me was while working up a run through a strip of woods, when I heard a bird rise some distance to my right. When looking in that direction I saw it coming my way. When it was nearly overhead, I fired. To my intense wonder, two came fluttering down. One of them, however, at once took wing, but I brought it down with the second barrel. Then came perplexity and doubt. I well knew that one of them had been sitting in the treetop, and that the other had blundered into the branches of the tree and came down, but which one? Had I been unwittingly guilty of the grievous sin of potting the innocent bird perched on the limb, or had I really made a beautiful shot at the ghost overhead as well as scoring the easy one?

In vain I pondered over the tangle. I could come to no satisfactory conclusion, until finally the cheering thought came to me that the noise of the impact of the bird upon the body of the tree that I had plainly heard could only have been made by the phantom, while the bird so quietly sitting upon the limb, confused by the uproar, had blundered into the branches and thus

came down to add one more pleasing memory for me to store against time of need.

I was once standing on guard at the edge of a run that wound along the foot of a steep hillside, when my companion, who was working toward me, flushed a bird that came down the run at lightning speed. I missed clean; there was no excuse. Just then a bird came fluttering down the hillside. As I listened to its death flutter I realized that I had potted it on the ground and so bad did I feel over the unsportsmanlike deed that I said nothing to my companion, who soon joined me. His pride for the wonderful shot and evident enjoyment sealed my lips, for I had not the heart to hurt his feelings by dispelling the illusion.

In sections of country where the partridge is frequently disturbed by the hunter, it is often the case that they will take flight while you are two or three gun shots away. No matter how staunch your dog, or how nicely he has done his point and has them sure, this practice will often bring to naught one's fondest hopes; for at the first sound indicating one's presence, the intended victim is away. In much of this rough

country it is nearly useless to try to follow; but, given a fair country, the proper thing to do is to mark well the direction of the bird and try for it again.

For many years it has been a hard and fast rule with me to shoot at every bird that rises, even when a long distance away. I have a well grounded belief that the whistle of the shot in their vicinity exercises an influence that causes them to lie better when one again finds them. If one can succeed in keeping on their course, and routing them a few times, he will, in nearly every instance, meet the reward of perseverance by obtaining a satisfactory rise.

Pleasant memories of many events of this nature often come to me to cheer my lonely hours, and I again am threading the mazy aisles of some old-time favorite cover. Again I view with pride the scene where by patient perseverance I outwitted the sly maneuvers of the wise old patriarch. Again my cup of joy is full, and gone are worldly cares. My wild shooting, as one of my companions termed it, has also brought me more than a hundred fold for the price of the ammunition expended. I have in this man-

ner made quite a number of wonderful shots that I recall with supreme satisfaction.

Perhaps the most remarkable of these is one that I made at a bird that had risen wild several times. Its finish came at last; for when it again rose from a clump of alders, a long distance away, I held some two feet above it and fired, when she tumbled to the ground stone dead. When we picked it up, its head was entirely missing, for the shot had bunched and cut it off as clean as could have been done with an axe.

I was once shooting with a friend who was noted for taking long chances; in fact, he usually shot at anything in sight. Occasionally, he brought one down from a long distance, greatly to his delight; for he dearly loved to boast about the shooting qualities of his gun, which he believed to be just a little ahead of any gun ever made.

We came out of a cover to a pasture that extended quite a distance, to a heavy growth of timber. A bird rose a long distance ahead, and started for the woods, when I let go at her and she came down like a stone. As this was a good bit further than my long distance friend

dared to boast, I was interested to see how he would take it; but the performance did not startle him a particle. He simply turned to me with a supercilious smile, and in a pompous manner remarked, "If you had my gun, you could have waited until she had got to the edge of the woods."

I once bagged a bird that I put safely in my pocket, and a good half hour later, just as I had emptied both barrels, this bird burst out from my pocket, and with phenomenal speed betook herself to parts unknown. I never saw her again, although I carefully searched for her for more than two hours.

I was once shooting with a friend who took along a young dog that had never been out. We had been in the cover but a short time, when a partridge flushed near us and my companion brought it down. Then, standing his gun against a tree, he took the puppy to the bird to see how he would perform. The dog behaved very nicely and pointed it in good style. After petting and praising him awhile, my companion went for the bird, but as he stooped to pick it up, the "dead bird" rose like a rocket and disappeared in the

forest. I will not repeat the language of my companion, nor do I feel competent to give anything like a truthful description of the very expressive workings of his countenance.

I was once standing at the edge of a dense thicket of tall pines awaiting my companion, who was some distance below, when I heard a bird rise and saw it coming directly toward me well up in the air. Now, one of the most necessary attributes of the successful sportsman is a rapid thinking capacity. As I had had considerable experience in such cases, and well knew that if I should try to bring this bird down in the orthodox manner by letting it pass and then trying for it, it would be safe among the pines before it was fifteen feet beyond me. So, instinctively I fired when it was about twenty yards distant and doubled it up, but as the grouse tumbled I saw that it was coming straight for me. I tried to dodge, but there was a dense bunch of bushes that would not admit of my moving, and tangled me up and held me fast until the bird, with a force that until that moment I would not have believed possible, struck me on the hip and completely knocked me out. It was several days

before I recovered from my lameness sufficiently to again take the field.

There was one old cock grouse that lived in an alder run adjoining a large tract of timber. He had always been too smart for us, although on several occasions we had cornered him where he could not get away; but every time something went wrong for us, and right for the bird, as he always came off from the encounter with flying colors. We usually worked the run from the timber up, for nearly all the birds found there would fly that way. But this old fellow would go in any direction so that it was away from us, and he would take such long flights and make such curves that we had given up looking for him after he had once started.

While shooting one day in this vicinity in company with the late Prof. Colburn, we struck the run at the upper end. As the wind was in the right direction, we worked it down toward the timber. We had gone but a short distance when old Mack came to a point some distance ahead of us, and I proposed to my companion that he make a detour and get in ahead of the bird, while I would wait the proper time and then go

to the dog. In case the bird should prove to be our old friend, we would stand a chance to take a rise out of him.

My companion took his departure, and after waiting until I thought him in position, I started for the dog; but had not gone more than half way to him when I heard the bird rise, and a few seconds later the report of my friend's gun. Soon he signalled for the dog. I started toward him and motioned for Mack to go, and as he understood the signal he was off at speed. When I joined Mr. Colburn he explained that he had winged the bird, that it had run too fast for him, and that Mack had gone on the trail. Just then he came back with the bird and upon examination we found that both wings were shot off below the first joint from the body, and that otherwise the bird was unharmed.

The only explanation of course is that the grouse was but a short distance away, and that the charge had not gone far enough to spread; and as he had held a bit too high it caught both wings when they were extended up.

I have often shot off a wing or head or leg, but never saw anything just like this. The bird

was one of the largest I have ever seen, and proved to be our wild friend; at least, we have never since found one in that vicinity that has caused us to believe to the contrary.

CHAPTER XVII.

HUMOROUS INCIDENTS.

WHENEVER I recall this it brings to mind an anecdote that Mr. Colburn related to me at that time. Two friends were out with him shooting, one of whom had not had much experience. As they were walking along a cart path in the woods Mr. Colburn saw a grouse standing in the path. Pointing out the bird to his inexperienced friend he bade him shoot it.

This was the opportunity of his life. Stepping two or three paces in front he tightened his grasp on the gun, and bringing it to his shoulder he turned his head around toward his companions, and with beaming countenance exclaimed, "Boys, this is the first partridge that ever I shot, and when we get back to town it's my——by George, he's gone!" It is perhaps needless to add that when they got back to town it was his——.

The flight of the partridge when it gets fairly going as a rule is in a straight line, but we once started one that flew in a half circle of about ten rods in diameter. My companion missed it the first rise, but brought it down on the next trial, when we found that its right wing had at some time been broken midway between the body and first joint, and that the ends of the broken bone had slipped by each other an inch and one-half, thus shortening her wing. The bones had grown firmly together in this position, enabling her to fly fairly well, but only in a circle. I have occasionally found wing-broken partridges, but with this exception all the fractures appeared to be of recent occurrence.

The wing-broken partridge is often an adept in hiding from its pursuers. It will occasionally escape the most rigid search by crawling into a crevice among the rocks of any convenient hole, where it will remain for a long time, sometimes until the next morning. For I recall two instances where this was the case, as was proven beyond doubt. When I lost a wounded bird in this manner I made it a point to visit the locality within a few hours, or if it was late in the day I

was usually there early the next morning, and in most cases succeeded in finding the bird.

I had one experience with a winged bird that gave me quite a time and very nearly threw my little brother into fits. As the incident comes back to me I again hear his merry shouts of laughter echoing through the woods.

There was an abnormal streak of fun in the makeup of this boy that endeared him to every one who knew him, for there was always something doing in his vicinity. I had winged a bird that fell near a large log. There was a hole in the log that for quite a distance I could see the bird, and standing my gun against the log I got down on all fours and reached into the hole for it, but it evaded my grasp by crawling further in. I then cut a stick four or five feet in length, leaving about four inches of a branch at the end for a hook. With full confidence in the result I resumed my recumbent position and pushed the stick into the hole, intending to pass the hook beyond her and yank her out. The grouse avoided the hook and the more I tried the further it crawled in until I could not reach her. I was about to go for a longer stick when I

heard a very lively ruction at the far end of the log. Before I realized what was up, the partridge hopped out of the hole like a cork out of a bottle, and notwithstanding that I put up my very best grab I missed her clean. It was then that the unexpected happened, for while I was flat on the ground and entirely helpless an evil-minded rabbit, following close behind the bird, came out of that hole and struck me squarely in the face; then turning a somersault he gathered himself together and with the most phenomenal speed took his departure for more congenial scenes. I was just a bit riled, and springing to my feet, I grabbed the gun and cut loose at the streak, but missed him with both barrels. Then I sat down on the log and gave my undivided attention to the vaudeville that boy was performing. Soon my slightly ruffled plumage was in its normal condition. I even began to believe that we had had lots of fun, but his statement that the rabbit had done nothing more than could have been expected under the circumstances, and that the somersault—there were two of them when we arrived home—belonged to me, led me to doubt his entire truthfulness.

This boy accompanied me one day to assist in the capture of a grouse that had bothered me not a little by taking flight before I could get near enough for a shot. Its favorite resort was an alder run, between some heavy timber and an impenetrable swamp to a hill.

It always flew to a place where it was perfectly safe, for it was impossible to follow.

On this occasion I stationed the boy at the edge of the cover near the upper end with instructions to wait there a certain time, until I had taken position at the lower end near the swamp, when he was to beat down the run to me. In fear that he would not await the proper time, I gave him my watch so that he should make no mistake. I then made a wide detour, and arrived at my chosen position, feeling sure that at last I had the best of this preternatually wise bird. I had been on guard but a short time, when I heard it rise some distance above, and with a firm grip on the gun and a feeling in my heart that this was to be the end, I turned and saw it going in the opposite direction; but this was not all, as I learned when I returned to the boy. He was in the thicket, diligently

searching for something, which I learned was my watch, that in the excitement of the moment he had hurled with all his force at the bird as it flew past him. Although we hunted long and faithfully for the lost time-piece, it was never found.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SHOOTING COINCIDENCES.

A CONGENIAL companion adds greatly to the pleasure of a day afield. As memory harks back through the long vista of years I am profoundly grateful that I have been so singularly blessed in this respect. As I realize that these memories can never be wrested from me so long as life shall last, the coming days when the easy chair shall claim me for its own are shorn of their terrors, and deep down in my heart is unutterable joy in the bright treasures so bountifully stored for time of need.

The first congenial spirit that came to me was a very early friend of my shooting career. Charles was nearly my age, but I had three seasons the advantage of him so far as field sports were concerned. We became acquainted

in early summer and were soon firm friends. So well did I perform my part that he was nearly as anxious for opening day as myself. He proved to be an apt scholar, and, before the second season was over, he could shoot as well as I.

He had acquired a wonderful knowledge of woodcraft so far as the hunting of the partridge was concerned. One of Charley's prominent characteristics was an insatiable desire to take a rise out of some one; to make them believe that things were not what they seemed; to prophesy unexpected events that always happened to him; to tell of wonderful dreams that always came true—all to the deep mystification of everyone and to the great delight of himself. I have a vivid recollection of a mutual attempt in this line that afforded me unbounded satisfaction at the time. I never recall the incident that a large share of that feeling does not come back to me.

We were after partridges, and hitching our team at the foot of a little hill we entered an alder run, and soon had a large covey going in every direction. Following the course that

most of them took, we came to an opening when Charley halted, and pointing to a patch of low sumac more than fifty yards from cover, assured me that every bit of cover like that was pretty sure to hold a partridge, and so apparently sincere were his words that I came very near thinking that he really believed it. As I was always ready to investigate any statement made by him we went to the place. We flushed a bird which flew in his direction, and as he gathered it, his "I told you so; I never knew it to fail" was so sincere that almost every one would have been forced to believe that this was "honest injun"; but so deeply had I studied his idiosyncracies that I knew almost as well as he did that he had seen the bird alight there. I said nothing of this, however, and gave him lots of taffy about his great knowledge of the habits of the bird, until I felt satisfied that he was sure that there was one on me.

Now, when anything of this nature is going I very much dislike to remain in debt for any length of time and—thanks to the inspiration of my guardian spirit—some of these things occasionally come my way.

When we returned to the wagon for lunch we seated ourselves by the side of the road, he upon a rock, while I took possession of a large stone that jutted from the wall some eight or ten feet above him. Not more than twenty feet beyond us was the mouth of a large culvert that crossed the road. When nearly through with our lunch I saw a partridge with stately step approach and fearlessly enter the opposite mouth of the culvert. Instinctively I reached for my gun, knowing that she would soon appear at our end, but before I had my gun in hand the aforesaid guardian spirit inspired me to open my mouth, and in a surprised tone and manner I exclaimed, "How like a spot in New Hampshire where, when eating lunch, a partridge rose nearly at our feet."

Just then the bird rose and flew up the road, and as I doubled it up I continued my narrative without a break—"and I laid her in the middle of the road."

Putting my gun down I arose, and with every indication of surprise that the guardian forced upon me I exclaimed: "That is the most remarkable coincidence that ever came to me."

A furtive glance at my companion convinced me that the partridge in the clump of sumac had been paid for, with lots to spare, for a more surprised looking individual I never saw. With eyes and mouth wide open he stood there, the color faded from his cheeks, and actually trembling as he faintly ejaculated, "Good heavens!"

When the dog brought the bird I hesitatingly reached for it, and then withdrew my hand as though I feared the thing was uncanny; but finally I took it, and with trembling voice I exclaimed: "It is all right, Charley, and a truly partridge, and I don't believe there is anything supernatural about it."

This little episode broke him all up for the remainder of the day, for I could plainly see that neither his mind nor gun was on the birds. When we returned to the wagon at night he picked up the bird and acknowledged that he still felt a bit creepy.

The late Col. Isaac Arnold, of the ordnance department, was a most agreeable companion in the field, especially when we were after partridges. He dearly loved the pursuit of the gamy bird and was fairly well informed as to

many of the details that are so necessary to success, when difficulties arise and unforeseen and unexpected troubles come to the front. He was one of the few sportsmen it has been my good fortune to meet who fully agreed with me that the first bird found should be followed to the end. Of course the wind up is not always a feather in our cap, for our wise bird very often leaves us staring with wide open eyes at the steep impassable hillside, or the impenetrable swamp with nothing to cheer us but thoughts of what might have been had it only gone in some other direction.

Among the many pleasant recollections of my friend there is one day that often comes back to me with ever renewed pleasure. We drove in the morning to the home of a friend who lived right in the midst of some of my favorite covers, and hitching the horse at the shed, we started for the covers with the good wishes of our friends who gave us detailed directions to several points where we would be sure to find birds.

Our first beat was through an old pasture that had been long neglected and grown up to birches

and alders, making an ideal place for birds. Working along one edge the dog swung to the right and struck a faint scent, but could not make it out. I started toward him while my companion continued along the edge. I had gone but a short distance when I heard the roar of rising birds and his cheery cry of "Mark!" I soon saw four partridges flying toward the lower end of the cover which was grown up to tall birches and maples with an occasional low growing bushy pine. When we came to the place the dog suddenly stopped on point within ten feet of one of these pines.

Motioning the colonel to go to an opening I forced a rise, giving him a fair shot. I could see the bird was hard hit, but it kept on, and as soon as he could untangle himself the colonel gave it the other barrel. The bird was too far away. When it had gone about a hundred yards it started nearly straight up in the air, and when three or four hundred feet high, it doubled up and came down, striking the ground with a thud. My companion remarked that it made as much noise as he did when he fell out of the chestnut tree. After a long search we found the bird

more than a hundred yards beyond where we expected to.

When we turned back to the small pines a bird rose quite a distance away, but I brought it down with a shot that was most satisfactory to me. A short time after my companion scored a bird that I had to literally kick from almost under the nose of the dog. The other bird rose out of shot and flew to a patch of alders. We marked down near the edge. When we arrived there, the colonel took position between the patch of alders and a dense swamp, while I went inside with the dog to find the bird.

The dog soon had her fast, and I put her up, when I had a fair shot and ingloriously missed. As it turned in the right direction I felt secure; for the colonel was a good shot, but somehow he failed to connect. When I came to him and told him that I was heartily ashamed of this performance he dryly remarked, "So am I, for I had nearly as good a chance as you did, and should have stopped her."

The bird flew through a long strip of open woods toward a dense thicket at the far end, and we at once went after her. When we had nearly

reached the edge of the timber the dog came to a point near a large stone heap, but it was in vain that we kicked every little bunch of brush in the vicinity, there was nothing in it, and concluding that the bird had taken flight, I went to the dog, and with my knee pushed him on a step or two when, with one foot on the heap of stones and his head turned toward it, he held his point and I knew that the bird was in there. Telling my companion to get ready I began to remove the stones. In a moment the bird came out with a rush, passing within two feet of his head, but he was ready and brought her down in fine style.

CHAPTER XIX.

A CAT AND A WOODCOCK.

THE remainder of the day passed without noteworthy incident until it was nearly sunset, when we came near the house with two more beauties added to our score. Between us and the house was an alder thicket that often held a woodcock, and as the dog entered the cover he found one. I motioned my companion to go for it. When the bird rose it went toward the house, and the colonel dropped it neatly just outside the cover; but as soon as it struck the ground the big yellow cat that belonged to the house grabbed it, and at her best pace made a bee-line for the house. Now, our hostess had told me that this cat had upon two occasions brought live woodcock home, so I had no fear that we would lose our bird, and when the colonel broke cover and

asked if he had killed the bird I told him that he had hit it hard and the last I saw of it it was not a foot from the ground just over a knoll near the house, and that we would probably find it in the dooryard, adding that a man who could shoot so as to drop his game in the wagon to save the trouble of carrying it was very near the limit.

When we turned the corner of the shed I saw the bird on the wagon seat and our hostess in the door about to explain; but I shook my head and made a slight motion with my hand, when she disappeared, for she knew from previous experience that something was doing. Just then the colonel caught sight of the bird and made an exclamation that caused me to turn, when I also saw it. Then in as awed a tone as I could command I exclaimed, "This is the most wonderful happening that I ever saw."

The colonel said not a word, and we drove home talking upon various subjects with never a hint from him until he left me at my door, when with a merry twinkle of his eye, he dryly said:

"When you get good and ready I would like

to have you explain that woodcock happening."

The clearing of the mystery appeared to please him immensely, but somehow I got it into my head that he did not care to have the boys get hold of it, and my opinion was confirmed by his silence upon the subject.

I was out one day with a farmer friend who often accompanied me, appearing to fully enjoy the sport, but I had not been able to make him take his gun along as he had never shot at a flying bird and knew that he could not do it. This day he saw a partridge perched upon the top of a stone wall and then he wanted the old gun. This was my opportunity. I improved it to the extent of obtaining a promise that he would clean up the old fusee and take it along in case another such chance should offer. When we returned to the house for dinner the first move he made was to take the old gun from the hooks over the fireplace and swab it out; then loading it with a light charge of powder he fired it off and pronounced it in good working order. Then at his request I loaded it for partridges, and after dinner we again took to the woods.

It was with no small amount of amusement

that I watched his performance as we went toward the cover, for he was evidently trying to get into gear by practicing all the maneuvers he thought necessary to success when the supreme moment should come, for as I rightly conjectured he had fully decided to try a bird flying. The manner in which he manipulated that old relic of by-gone times was a revelation to me, although I had had a large and varied experience in this line—his tactics went beyond anything I had ever witnessed. His first effort was in the right direction, for he attempted to bring the gun to his shoulder in proper position as quickly as possible. After some little practice he was apparently satisfied with the result, for he stepped up to a bush and gave it a vigorous kick, and as the imaginary bird rose, he braced himself and swinging the old gun into position he shut both eyes and made believe pull. He did not appear to be satisfied, for he shook his head in a deprecatory manner, when I remarked that he had pulled too quick. "Yes," said he, "and I shot four feet over her."

After he had made a few more trials he appeared to be getting on to them, for a satisfac-

tory look came over his countenance as he remarked that he was "kinder getting used to it," and we started for the cover. We had not gone far, when a bird flushed wild and I marked it down in a little thicket near the edge of the woods where the dog soon found it. Taking position on a little knoll that covered the line the bird would take, I bade my companion go around the thicket and then go in and put the bird up and "smash her," which was his favorite expression to me under like circumstances.

Now, my friend was rather a small wiry individual with nothing Apollo-like or striking in his usual appearance, but you should have seen him there as with head well up, shoulders drawn back, with the stride and bearing of an athlete, he marched to the fray. I could plainly see that he had a good grip on the old gun, but I did not quite like the way it wobbled, and I gave my undivided attention to the performance, for I was deeply interested. Although I had mentally wound up the matter in three or four different ways, I still had lingering doubts as to the sequel.

I had not long to wait, for he was soon at

the far side, and as he entered the thicket, the bird rose to one side and partly behind him, when he whirled around, and as the bird was passing within ten feet of his head he fired, and although he never touched a feather he scared the wits out of the grouse and it blundered into a dense low-growing apple tree and came to the ground.

With a gladsome shout he exclaimed, "I've got him!" and threw his gun more than twenty feet and made a dive for his victim, which he grabbed, but before he had straightened up that "dead bird" came to life again, and worse than that it got away with the loss of a little plumage and came straight for me, flying within six feet of my legs.

Now, it is my pride and boast that I am always keyed up and ready to shoot, but I am forced to confess that time I scored a lost opportunity, for I did not realize that a bird was in the air nor that I had anything like a gun in my hands. I was rolling on the ground almost in a fit until the thought came to me that I would surely burst a blood vessel, when I partly straightened up just as my companion broke cover with the most indescribable look upon his countenance

that I ever beheld. As he glanced at me and then at the three tail feathers—that he still grasped in his hands—I was again rolling on the ground.

After quite a search the old gun was found standing straight up with the muzzle sticking in the soft ground.

CHAPTER XX.

LOST OPPORTUNITIES.

I ONCE scored a lost opportunity that afforded my two companions lots of fun, although I must confess that I did not more than half like it. There was a large rock just ahead of me that was ten or twelve feet square, nearly six feet in height, and flat on top. When we came to it I passed on one side and my companions on the other. I had nearly reached the end, and as I crowded against the rock to avoid a scrub bush that was in my path, a partridge rose from the edge of the rock within a foot of my head, and with a roar brushed my hat with her wings. Although there was scarcely a tree or bush in the way I never saw her except the fleeting glimpse that I caught as she rose from the rock, for I turned in the wrong direction and I have

no doubt that the peculiar circumstances of the case rattled me just a bit. My companions insisted that I had turned completely around at least four times, as was clearly demonstrated by the muzzle of my gun at an angle of forty-five degrees, describing just that number of erratic circles, for this was all the proof they had as they could not see me, the rock being between us.

My companions appeared to enjoy this very much, and chaffed me unmercifully. Of course I joined in their mirth, although for the life of me I could not see much to laugh at. That evening, when I jotted down in my note book "another lost opportunity," I again firmly resolved that this should be the last one.

A few pages further on, however, I find there is mention of another lost opportunity, but a calm reconsideration of the matter assures me that this is a misnomer.

I had flushed a partridge in front of the dog, and it had dodged behind a tree. As I side stepped to beat the move, a woodcock rose at my feet and flew between my arm and the gun. My companion very nearly had a fit; even the dog laughed at the performance and plainly

showed that he enjoyed it. I still have a hazy recollection that I must have done something abnormal to have aroused both man and dog, but I cannot remember the particulars well enough to give an intelligent description of the affair. I feel, however, that instead of jotting down in my note book another "lost opportunity" I should simply have recorded a miss with both barrels.

It was indeed a true sportsman who said, "It is not all of shooting to shoot," for amid the thronging memories of bygone days, when sport galore was sure, it is often the case that the big bag secured is dwarfed almost to insignificance by some unexpected occurrence that will ever remain a source of pleasure. Even the mishap that caused pain and wounded my pride, when pain and chagrin have taken flight, is often remembered with something very near akin to pleasure. This at least is the case with me, for when in pursuit of the partridge I have always tried to round up the many haps and mishaps into a satisfactory and pleasing whole, and I am very pleased to say with almost perfect success.

Any one who is a passably good shot can,

with practice and perseverance, become fairly successful in the pursuit of the royal ruffed grouse, but to him who understands the whispering of the lofty pines and can interpret what the ragged rocks are ever saying, whose soul is tuned in harmony with the melody of the laughing waters and whose heart is filled with love for all that makes this beautiful world so bright, skill with the gun is of minor importance and trifling mishaps are as naught.

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